

CHRISTIAN COURIER

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naturally ... p. 11**



56th year of publication

**Protestant ethic and the spirit
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Mugabe continues to lead Zimbabwe into chaos

Harry der Nederlanden (with files from ENI, Compass Direct, *The National Post*, and *The Globe and Mail*)

Until December, South Africa's President Thabo Mbeki has been silent about the intimidation and violence and the seizures of farms in neighboring Zimbabwe — all done with the blessing of its autocratic President Mugabe. Early last month Mbeki acknowledged that in the present atmosphere of beatings, threats and murders there can be no free elections in Zimbabwe.

"Clearly, in a situation where people get disenfranchised, in which people get beaten up so that they don't act according to their political convictions, obviously



Robert Mugabe

there cannot be free elections," Mbeki told foreign journalists, according to the *National Post*.

"And if you had elections which people do not see as legitimate ... you then will probably end up with a situation worse than it is now."

Many observers are convinced that Mugabe has used the illegal seizures of farms by so-called veterans to ensconce himself in the presidency for another term. The latest elections saw a lot of seats go to the opposition party. That's when the trouble started.

Mugabe, now 77, has been in power since 1980, when he led the former Rhodesia to independence from Britain.

At the time, he promised that whites and blacks would live in harmony in Zimbabwe, but many

thousands of white farmers have been forced to leave the country, dispossessed of their land.

Mugabe told a rally his land seizures would continue "with or without sanctions." And he has said that he will refuse election monitors from foreign countries to oversee the coming elections.

Mass protests threatened

Mugabe's opponents threatened to launch a series of mass protests to force him to accept constitutional reforms, reported *The National Post*, and critics denounced a media bill they say is meant to curb press freedom in the runup to presidential elections.

"We are dealing with a dictator-

ship determined to hang on to power through hook and crook, and we have no option but to try all kinds of protests to be heard," Lovemore Madhuku, chairman of the National Constitutional Assembly, told reporters.

Canon Tim Neill, former vicar general of Harare, fears for his life and the lives of his family, *Compass Direct* reported, because he has dared to speak out consistently against the injustices taking place in Zimbabwe. His constant criticism of the excesses, injustices and use of violence of the ruling party, the Zimbabwe African National Union — Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), led to threats

See ZIMBABWE page 2...

Christian persecution from Afghanistan to Vietnam

Compass Direct selects the year's top stories

(Compass Direct) — Some stories dominate front-page headlines, while others face obscurity from repetition or perceived irrelevance. The same holds true for articles related to Christian persecution. Below are 10 story lines that Compass believes were significant enough to recap at years' end. A few received worldwide coverage; several suffered neglect. Yet, each one holds the potential for long-range impact on the Persecuted Church. That alone makes them worth reviewing.

Afghanistan — aid workers freed

The 15-week saga of eight Western relief workers jailed by the Taliban regime in Afghanistan on charges of propagating Christianity captured wider international media coverage than perhaps any other religious freedom case of 2001.

Arrested in Kabul in early August, the eight expatriate staff of Shelter Now were accused by the strict Islamist regime of conducting covert Christian missionary

work among Afghan Muslims. Sixteen of the Afghan staff were also detained on suspicion of failing to report their employers' alleged proselytizing. Taliban edicts issued in January had decreed the death penalty for any Afghan who converted to Christianity, along with any non-Muslim caught trying to encourage such apostasy.

Only when their trial opened

before the Taliban Supreme Court

did the eight learn they were ac-

cused of "converting Afghan Mus-

lims."

Three days later, the

September 11 attacks on New

York and Washington swung

world attention toward the Kabul

regime, accused by the United

States of harboring the Al-Qaeda

extremists blamed for the carnage.

After the aerial bombings of Kabul began October 7, the prisoners were moved to other quarters several times, and the Supreme Court suspended their trial indefinitely, citing "war conditions."

In a final 48-hour ordeal, the eight prisoners were driven south by the Taliban when Kabul fell to the Northern Alliance forces on the

night of November 12. Locked in a local prison along the way, they were freed the next day by opposition troops who routed their Taliban captors and protected them until U.S. military helicopters arrived in the early hours of November 15 to airlift them to safety in Pakistan. Their 16 Afghan colleagues were all released from prison by the time the Northern Alliance took over Kabul.

China — Ding's star rises and falls

This was the year retired Three Self Patriotic Movement chief, Bishop Ding Guangxun, saw his campaign against evangelicals in the official church reach its zenith and then begin to dissipate.

Calling it "theological construction," Ding launched the campaign with Religious Affairs Bureau backing three years ago to purge evangelical preaching from the official church. In a throwback to the Maoist era, pastors had to appear once a week and read Ding's liberal theology, write



COURTESY VOICE OF THE MARTYRS

Chinese evangelist and pastor Li De Xian (centre) was arrested by Chinese police in October 1999.

model answers to model questions, and if they begged to differ, face dismissal.

The centre of the campaign was Nanjing Theological Seminary.

But the spectacle of liberal theology being imposed on evangelicals with coercive force alienated the international audience. The Three Self Patriotic Movement,

the official Protestant body in China, began to lose its credibility abroad. Even more importantly, many members and leaders within the Three Self began to quietly slip out to join the more tolerant house churches. Central government saw what was happening in late summer and the order was put out to

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News

Missionaries believed dead in Colombia

... continued from page 1
quietly discontinue the campaign.

Not that the house churches had an easier year. While the Falun Gong crackdown continued with unabated viciousness, house churches regarded as eccentric in doctrine also became classed as cults. Hundreds in the countryside from the Little Flock offshoot, sometimes known as "Shouters," were rounded up, with dozens being given two- or three-year sentences.

Only a lack of co-ordination among underground Protestants prevents us from knowing the true extent of the 2001 round-up, but it is fair to say that at least 200 were arrested, and Compass has learned of at least 50 receiving sentences.

All of which makes one wary of October's news of a planned overture by the government to the house churches. The government is set to offer house churches a registered existence independent of the Three Self.

However, the overture is sure to divide the house churches into pro- and anti-registration camps, and may well dominate the religious dynamics of 2002.

Colombia — missionaries declared dead

After years of research, negotiation, prayer and tears, New Tribes Mission (NTM) concluded that three American missionaries kidnapped in 1993 in Panama were shot by their captors three years later as Colombian troops closed



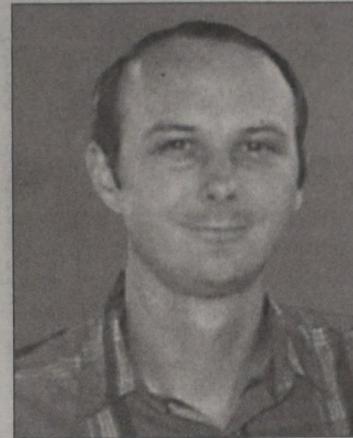
Two of the missing New Tribes missionaries: Rick Tenenoff (left) and Dave Mankins.

in. Both the mission and the hostages' families are satisfied that the men are dead, even though the remains of Dave Mankins, Rick Tenenoff and Mark Rich may never be found.

Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, guerrillas kidnapped the missionaries on January 31, 1993, in eastern Panama, near that country's border with Colombia. The three were planting a church among the Kuna Indians.

The military mounted at least one expedition to search for their bodies, following leads that ultimately proved to be fruitless.

In 2000, some 33,000 Colombians died in violent attacks. According to government statistics, the bloody conflict being fought between Marxist guerrilla movements, right-wing paramilitary units and the army claimed about 15 per cent of the victims. Vi-



lence related to drug dealing, personal vengeance, local community conflict and common crime claimed the rest. Colombia has become the most violent society in the Americas.

The enemy is becoming harder and harder to identify in Colombia. The government blames the guerrillas for most atrocities. The guerrillas, in turn, accuse the paramilitaries of greater brutality. The rebels say they are fighting to end political and economic injustice.

Civil war has plagued Colombia for nearly four decades, but the country has witnessed an escalation of the conflict in the past three years. In addition to the thousands killed, the war has driven some two million people from their homes, many of them evangelical Christians. They live as political refugees in their own country, without homes, jobs or schools for their children.

The evangelical church has problems with all the armed groups, who assassinate pastors, threaten and drive people into exile. Over the past three years, according to the Human Rights and Peace Commission, between 350 and 500 local churches have been forced to close. Nearly all are small, rural congregations. Dozens of pastors have been killed.

France — anti-sect law could set precedent

Despite the protests of the country's half-a-million evangelicals, the French Parliament on May 30 passed a controversial anti-cult law so vaguely worded it could conceivably be used to oppress any religious minority in the future.

Initially designed to monitor 172 cults like the Unification Church and the Church of Scientology, the word "cult" is never defined, and a dangerous precedent for government interference in religious affairs may have been set.

Though the clause "mental manipulation" was dropped from the final draft, it still makes a criminal of anyone who converts someone who is "in a state of psychological or physical dependence" by "the exertion of heavy or repeated techniques liable to alter judgment."

Depending on the climate of interpretation, that could cover almost any attempt at conversion.

Certainly the implications have been seized upon abroad. China was among the first to applaud the

measure and is studying it closely for assistance in its own crackdown on cults, which — legally speaking — includes house churches. Germany, Austria and Belgium are also considering similar legislation.

India — where mobs beat Christians every month

Hindu extremists continued their campaign of murder, harassment and slander against the more evangelical among India's 40 million Christians.

Brutal beatings of outreach teams have become almost commonplace. In Gujarat state following a devastating earthquake, Christian relief workers were chased away by members of the Hindu extremist Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). Those who resisted were beaten. "We cannot even tend the sick and feed the hungry," Christians protested.

There were some encouraging signs, however. On April 28, ten men were given life sentences for gang-raping nuns three years previously. On March 1, the trial began of Mr. Dara Singh, accused of masterminding the killing of Australian missionary Graham Staines and his two sons in January 1999.

But government leaders continue to reveal their RSS leanings with Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee accusing Christians of seeking to make converts under the cover of welfare activities — an old dusty slander, long discredited

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Zimbabwe no longer a free country, say church leaders

... continued from page 1
against his life and a campaign of personal hatred in the national media.

Earlier this year, Neill survived an attempt to kill him when a vehicle was driven head-on into his car. The pressure from the national security organization, the CIO, has intensified, he said: "The major injustice at this moment is that there is one law for ZANU-PF, the government party, and another for the rest of Zimbabweans."

Terror goes unpunished

"These injustices will only be redressed in a free country," he said. "We no longer have hope that Mugabe can or will put things right. We are trying to mobilize pressure groups internally and externally to curb the violence — it's damage control. The churches seem to have gone quiet. In July, the Zimbabwe Council of Churches brought out an

encouraging statement condemning the injustice, as did the Roman Catholic Church earlier."

Earlier last year Roman Catholic Church leaders published a statement that said, "This is no longer a free country. People live in abject fear of violence, crime and threats. The rule of law is no longer respected; terror and intimidation go unpunished."

Since then, however, the church has been silent. According to *Compass Direct*, Pius Ncube, the Catholic archbishop of Bulawayo, has received death threats for condemning the violence of ZANU-PF. Incidents of violence against black families living in remote villages have increased dramatically and have created an atmosphere of fear. This seems to be preventing churchmen from speaking out. Those that do can expect threats, a hate campaign in the government media or retaliatory violence against their families.

A human rights group recorded 47 political murders and more than 20,000 cases of other abuses ranging from assault to rape and torture last year, with ZANU-PF implicated in more than 90 per cent of all offenses.

Hypocrisy denounced

Recently, Alex Smith of ENI reports, Pius Ncube denounced the "hypocrisy" of Mugabe's government and ordered church workers to defy an edict that only ruling party officials may distribute food aid. He said malnutrition in the wake of bad rains was becoming widespread and that Mugabe's party was punishing millions of people in the south of the country who voted for the opposition in last year's parliamentary elections.

"The hunger is caused by the government's hypocrisy," charged Ncube. "It wants to distribute food assistance itself, so as to buy votes. It does not care how many people

die as long as it can stay in power. For us Christians that is unacceptable. As far as I am concerned, President Mugabe is a Roman Catholic when it suits him."

Critics have also vehemently opposed a news media bill proposed by the government, which threatens jail terms for journalists who violate new regulations. It largely bars foreign nationals from working as correspondents in the country and provides for a strict licensing system.

"Should the bill be passed into law in its present form, then clearly a major showdown is in the making between the government and the independent press," said *The Standard*, a Zimbabwe newspaper.

Art Wright, former high commissioner to Zimbabwe, writing in *The Globe and Mail*, says that despite Mugabe's use of violence and intimidation, organized opposition has been growing among black and white trade union members, large

and small commercial farmers, professionals, academics and businessmen. Mugabe has tried to portray the opposition as tools of the whites, who are now less than 0.5 per cent of the population.

Until early last year, land redistribution had been going forward by legal means. After voters rejected Mugabe's bid to gain the presidency for life, he began using his supporters to terrorize the opposition. As a result of the violent take-overs, many of the most productive farms now lie fallow, says Wright, and tens of thousands of farm workers have been displaced. Formerly a food exporting country, Zimbabwe now needs massive food imports.

Wright points out that Canada has done little or nothing to discourage Mugabe. Both the U.S. and the European Union are considering bills that would erect sanctions against Zimbabwe's leaders.

JANUARY 14, 2002

News

Positive developments in Indonesia but Christians still threatened by radical Muslims

POSO, Indonesia (EP)

A large-scale attack by Muslim radicals against Christians on the Indonesian island of Sulawesi appears to have been averted. However, sources say the potential for a new attack remains high.

Planned attack averted

International Christian Concern, a Christian human rights group, said on Dec. 5, 2001, that a planned attack against the more than 63,000 Christians of the Tentena area has been averted. While the threat of a massive attack and great loss of life still remains, recent action on the part of the Indonesian government appears to have, at least for now, thwarted the plans of the Jihad forces.

The Indonesian government has dispatched at least 2,600 military troops, and another report



PHOTO FROM BAPTIST NEWS WEBSITE

A fire in Jakarta: part of ongoing violence against Christians in Indonesia.

indicated that the government will dispatch additional troops for a total of 4,000 in order to deal with crisis in the region. ICC was told that the military will remain in the region for at least six months.

There is still concern about the involvement of the military also

carrying out atrocities against the Christians, since the majority are Muslim. In several other incidents of violence, the military assisted the Jihad forces in their attacks against Christian communities. The government of Indonesia has expressed concern that such inci-

dents occurred and has indicated that more oversight will be provided to reduce hostile involvement on the part of certain military units.

The Indonesian government has dispatched several high-level ministers to the area, who have met with religious and civic leaders in the region and were to report back to President Megawati. The Indonesian government is considering declaring a state of civil emergency in the region, which would give the military total authority over the police, essentially installing martial law.

Christians demand removal of Jihad forces

The Christian leadership is demanding that the military remove all Jihad forces from the region in order to assure long-term security for the Christian community before daily life can return to normal.

ICC stressed that the Christians of Tentena are not out of danger yet. Leaders of the Laskar Jihad have promised to carry out attacks

against non-Muslims in the area. There are still about 30,000 refugees living in Tentena after the Jihad attacked and destroyed their villages.

Enormous need for shelter

Steven Snyder, president of International Christian Concern (ICC), traveled to Tentena in mid-November to deliver aid and conduct a fact-finding mission.

Snyder reported that there is an enormous need for medical services and shelter for thousands of refugees in Tentena. "The hospital and public services are unable to cope with the needs of the growing number of refugees who have fled to Tentena, the last Christian town where help can be obtained. There is also a need for fuel for transportation, cooking, etc. due to a blockade by the Jihad which has prevented many essential items from being delivered to Tentena."

Snyder said travel in and out of Tentena "remains extremely dangerous to Christians, if not impossible."

The EFC and CCC intervene together in Harvard Mouse case



A house mouse eats some grain. The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada and the Canadian Council of Churches ask: Can we patent mice?

a mouse so that it is predisposed to getting cancer, the onco-mouse. The fellows of the university applied for a patent not only on the process and the genetic anomalies of the onco-mouse, but also on the mouse itself. The Canadian Commissioner of Patents granted patents over the process and the genetic composition of the mouse but denied it over the creature itself. The Federal Court, Trial Division, upheld the Commissioner's decision. The Federal Court of Appeal, in a two to one decision, overturned the previous decisions and granted the patent.

Exciting time of change

"Biotechnology has placed us at an exciting time of change in the relationship of human beings to all other living organisms," says Janet Somerville, General Secretary of the Canadian Council of Churches. "We humans didn't invent mice, bears or salmon. We are fellow creatures with them. Can we patent a fellow creature, even if we have caused it to change genetically? We can patent a better mousetrap. How do we more accurately express the relationship with living, self-reproducing animals which have co-existed with us for millennia? More generally: How do we honor, in law, the priority of

creation as a whole over any current human plan?"

The EFC and CCC will be arguing that patenting of mammals commodifies and objectifies life. Further, the ownership interest created by granting a patent is offensive as applied to higher life forms because it creates rights in the patent holder, without any corresponding responsibilities for the

life and health of animals subject to the patent. The patenting of transgenic mammals would also raise the question of patenting human beings, including human embryos. It is not appropriate for the court to expand the application of the Patent Act by allowing the patenting of higher life forms. This issue is better addressed by Parliament.

Muslims 'will soon outnumber Anglicans'

(Religion Today) — Figures to be released last month by Christian Research say that in 2000, there were about 620,000 Muslims in Britain and although the rate of growth is expected to decline, there will be an estimated 750,000 by 2005, reports the News Telegraph, UK.

Sunday churchgoing among members of the Church of England and other British Anglicans is expected to fall to an estimated 953,000 in 2005. If present trends continue, the number of active Muslims will outstrip practicing Anglicans around 2013, said Dr. Peter Brierley, executive director of Christian Research, an organization that collates religious statistics.

Since the 1960s, there has been a marked growth of Islamic observance in Britain, with the number of registered mosques rising from 10 to almost 700, and the Muslim population to about 1.5 million. However, a survey of mosque attendance in 1985 found that about half attend the mosque for festivals, and a third on a weekly basis.

MARKHAM, Ont. — The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC) and the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC) announced that they have been granted intervenor status in the Harvard Mouse case currently before the Supreme Court of Canada. The case concerns the patentability of a genetically modified mouse.

"New biotechnologies raise many substantial questions in the sphere of ethics and public policy," comments Gary Walsh, president of the EFC. "Legal argu-

ments probably can't address all of those new questions. But they can help us frame the decisions that society needs to make. We need to consider how to behave like stewards with these new technologies. The churches belong in this many-layered conversation, and one good place to start is before the Supreme Court of Canada."

The onco-mouse

Harvard University genetically altered the genetic composition of

Editorial

Songs of gratitude; songs of lament; songs of the Spirit

Harry der Nederlanden

I'm writing this on New Year's Day, so I'm still in a reflective mood, looking back at the year that was.

We think of history as a series of interconnected events, a sequence of facts that are what they are apart from what we may make of them. Yet, when we reflect on those events, those facts, what leaps out at us is their emotional charge, the aura attached to them.

That's true on the personal level but also on other levels.

When I look back on this past year, the facts that stand out in my own life have to do with cancer – the uncertainty prior to the diagnosis, the operation, the hospital stay, the infections, the re-admission to the hospital, the irritations of the tube up my nose and the tube in my bladder, the dreaded chemotherapy – a litany of rather demoralizing events.

A year of blessings

Yet, on looking back, I don't remember 2001 as a miserable year. On the contrary, I recall it as a year of blessings, of unexpected joys, of a sense of gratitude, of being carried by grace, not just the grace of God but the grace of many people. I received more, much more, than was taken from me.

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That's not because I have a naturally upbeat, optimistic disposition or because I am exceptionally pious. Like Bert Hielema, I have something of a pessimistic, apocalyptic streak in me. When I look around at world events, I am struck by the fragility of human institutions and the often perverse use to which they are put. The forces of violence, hate, dissolution, meaninglessness, oppression and death seem to be in the ascendant in many parts of the world, and we seem to be trapped in global processes that turn us into exploiters no matter what we do. You don't have to be a radical or a Marxist to see the harsh facts of our world. Millions are being ground down by unemployment, poverty, hunger, injustice, warfare, persecution, disease, and they experience few of life's joys.

God continues to visit us with joys, hope

Nevertheless, God continues to visit us with joys and with hope, and out of the ruins songs continue to rise up, songs given to us by the Spirit. In the midst of events that one would expect to be disheartening, God visited me with a sense of gratitude and peace. I am very thankful for that.

Yet, it's a puzzle, a mystery.

For it is not so for everyone who calls on the name of the Lord. I do not wish to say by my testimony that this is what faith in God brings to everyone. Some believers do experience the anguish of a sense of abandonment and even betrayal by God. They cry out to him from the pit of despair and they get no response, no spark of joy comes to them. They languish in darkness.

During this past year a friend of mine watched helplessly as his wife suffered terrible convulsions that incapacitated her so badly she could no longer care for herself; they robbed her of years of her memory and of the relations she had built over those years; they eventually put her in a nursing home and deprived her even of the power of speech, though she could still spell out messages.

Although he prayed fervently, his wife grew worse and worse until she was so miserable she wanted nothing more than death. Yet, even that was not granted her for many months.

Darkness and bitterness

For him there was no comforting presence. Only darkness and bitterness. Death seemed to envelop him. At her death, he was empty and could not testify in joy to the presence of a good God. Others had to speak for him, even as he once had to speak for his wife. At the commemoration service, he had recourse to the words of a poet. The words of another uttered the emotions that gripped his heart. They were words of lament, a contemporary expression of the psalms of lament written by David out of the depths of his despair.

One reason I don't unambiguously welcome contemporary praise music into our worship services is that they tend to displace the Psalms. Nowhere else do we as a people and as individuals so clearly get the awesome permission to grab hold of God's lapels and shake him. Nowhere else do we get the permission to confront and berate him. Too much of contemporary music leaps to the note of victory or

ecstasy and seeks to remain there permanently. We need to hold on to the Psalms of lament and sing them. If not for ourselves, for others.

Scripture does not burden those who are weeping and sorrowing with the message that if you are unable to raise up words of praise or joy, your faith must be lacking. God has given us a wide range of positions or attitudes from which to address him, and by no means are all of them from a comfortable pew.

Priority to those weeping and sorrowing

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus gives priority to those who are weeping and sorrowing. He does not say that they are weeping for their sins; certainly some of those who are weeping are doing so for the misery and injustice that has befallen them; some of them are crying out at the brokenness of the world that they have experienced in their own bones and brains. When we haven't the words to express the awful misery that has swallowed us up, the Spirit of God himself will cry out on our behalf.

We cannot only sing praise songs; it is a transgression against the Spirit.

Nor must we seek a permanent stance of a victorious faith from which alone we may speak. Scripture gives us many voices, many stances, many positions in our ever changing journey of faith, and we need to take up into our mouths the expressions of those who are elsewhere on the journey.

Joining his voice with the suffering

Although I am filled with gratitude for what the Lord has done for me personally in this past year, I join my voice with those thousands of Indonesian Christians who have been uprooted from their homes and who have seen their loved ones slaughtered by marauding Islamists. I join my voice with the thousands of African Christians who are dying of AIDS and with the thousands of children who have lost one or both parents to this horrific disease. I join my voice with the millions of refugees who have no home to return to, no livelihood, no hope. I join my voice with the millions of South Americans who can barely eke out enough to feed their children even in good times when there is work and who live in dread of the slightest downturn, for it means hunger, sickness, starvation for them and their children. I join my voice with the millions of believers who live in fear of their own governments (instituted by God) and of their fellow citizens because confessing Christ is a crime.

I can do this only by keeping myself informed about the condition of my fellow believer not just in my own church but in the church of Christ that is growing by miraculous leaps and bounds in distant parts of the globe. We weep with those who are sorrowing so that we can also rejoice with them when they are delivered and given new life, life everlasting through him who was humbled and tormented to death for our sake.

The songs God gives us include songs of lament as well as of celebration, cries of despair as well as melodies of praise. God meets us where we are and gives us his Word that he is with us — even when we cannot see or feel his presence.

JANUARY 14, 2002

Letter

Belgic confession requires that ministers serve on church councils

Some weeks ago I joined the discussion about the appropriateness or inappropriateness of ministers serving on CRC church councils in Ontario. There is apparently no dispute that this practice is required by our confession (Belgic Confession) and our Church Order. The confession states explicitly that our practice is the "spiritual order that our Lord has taught us in his Word," and the Church Order assumes that in its regulation. The question raised on the pages of CC, therefore, has not been whether a minister ought to serve on a church council according to our tradition and beliefs, but whether the Ontario office of "The Public Guardian and Trustee" will permit our churches to practice what they confess to be the spiritual order for the church.

The integrity of my earlier response has been questioned by a recent writer. Since I am neither Canadian nor a lawyer, the writer impugns the authority and propriety of my response to this issue in as much as I "enjoy complete immunity" as a U.S. citizen. Such *ad hominem* argumentation, however, deflects the issue and does not alter the situation.

Wrestling with the issue

A church leader like myself would indeed be foolish to enter such a discussion if he had not sought solid legal advice before he spoke. For several years (at least five) the Board of Trustees – Canada wrestled with the issue about ministers as directors of Christian Reformed churches. When the Letters Patent (Articles of Incorporation) and the Bylaws for congregations were being drafted, the Board devoted many meetings to discerning the church's position and the Ontario situation relative to ministers as directors. Legal counsel was sought, the advice was followed, and the documents were worded accordingly, including permission for ministers to serve as members of church council. The Board, and eventually synod, recommended that the churches incorporate in the federal jurisdiction pursuant to the Canada Corporations Act. The CRC's Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws have been approved by Industry Canada and we have been assigned Identifier number 99-1. A local church's approval for incorporation is automatic when using the approved documents.

Legal opinion sought again

More recently (August 27, 2001) legal opinion was again sought regarding this matter. In the remainder of this letter I shall quote freely from that opinion. After considering some of the same regulations and circumstances referred to in CC by Mr. David A. van der Woerd (CC, June 25, 2001), the CRC legal counsel wrote:

"The fact is that there is no clear definitive answer as far as our churches are concerned. Technically it could be argued that any incorporated church should apply to the Public Trustee's Office for authority to have a paid minister sit on the board of directors."

The Public Trustee's Office has the authority to sign what is tantamount to an Ontario Court Order. There is, however, no clear statement in law directing churches,

as charitable organizations, to refrain from having paid ministers function as a director or board member. The following should be considered:

- a) There is no mechanism for prosecuting or penalizing a church simply because its minister is a director;
- b) The Public Trustee has the "watchdog" role in Ontario for ensuring [that] charitable organizations are appropriately managed, presumably for the protection of the public;
- c) The Public Trustee's Office is complaint driven only;
- d) The Public Trustees Office would be unlikely to engage in any action simply because a minister in an incorporated church was a voting member of the board of directors of the church, unless there was an additional complaint of mismanagement or conflict of interest in the application or distribution of monies. In the past, only cases of clear and gross abuse have stirred the Public Trustee into action;
- e) There is no legal precedent in Ontario involving any church which prohibits it from having a paid minister serve as a director;

f) Clearly the concern is "conflict of interest." A director should not be involved in discussions concerning his or her salary or benefits. As long as matters involving the collection, distribution and application of monies are properly taken care of, then ... the potential for concern simply because a minister is a member of the board of directors is negligible.

Courts reluctant to interfere with churches

Furthermore, the legal opinion notes that it is clear that "the courts are reluctant to interfere with churches — particularly if they observe their own procedures and policy (emphasis added)." Even though the legal opinion acknowledges that the broad general principle regarding directors of publicly funded charities not being remunerated by that charity has some logic to it, it also points out that our churches are a special kind of charity in three ways:

- a. They do not solicit funds from the [general] public;
- b. Nor do our ministers set their own salaries or benefits; and
- c. The full participation of ministers in all matters of the corporation is a long hallowed principle of the denomination."

The legal opinion summarizes its conclusions regarding ministers as directors/council members as follows:

1. Properly run churches need have no fear of the Public Trustee's Office in this regard.
2. There is good reason to believe that the "general policy" does not apply to churches and at the very least ... the Public Trustee's Office recognizes churches as a special kind of "charity."
3. There is no case in law where this "policy" has been enforced by Court Order against a church and I do not believe formal action will be taken against a church simply because the minister is a director.
4. Any church that continues to have

concern can bring an application to the Public Trustee's Office for an order permitting its salaried minister to be a director of the church corporation. This process is fairly costly and needs to be done on a church by church basis.

5. If churches follow the traditional CRC procedures relating to conflict matters and all financial matters are appropriately managed there is little if any fear of government interference in the operating of a church.

6. Until there is a test case, or clear Law or Regulation on the matter, churches should continue to incorporate Federally using the proposed By-Law and Articles the Denomination has on file.

Seriously considering confessional teachings

When the Board of Trustees – Canada adopted recommendations and regulations during the years 1997 to 1999, it seriously considered the confessional and church order teachings as well as the type of legal opinion referenced above. Even though the words quoted come from August 2001, the

legal understanding contained in them was already available to the Board in 1997.

My earlier submission to CC, therefore, was not an attempt to impose a U.S. opinion upon a Canadian audience, but an effort to assure our Canadian churches that our regulated way of requiring ministers to serve as members of council is grounded in Scripture and the confession and is not inconsistent with the Ontario legal and regulatory system. Inasmuch as there continues to be some dispute about the correct understanding of the legal situation in Ontario, the synod's advice to the churches in Canada to incorporate federally still seems very wise. Furthermore, it seems unwise and unfaithful to abandon the "spiritual order that our Lord has taught us in his Word" (B.C. Art. 30) when the authorities have not established legislation that forbids us from practicing it. If such legislation were adopted, then the church would need to review its options and act in an appropriate manner.

David H. Engelhard
General Secretary of the CRCNA
Grand Rapids, Mich.

Fears about ministers and boards unwarranted

I have read the several articles by David van der Woerd appearing in *Christian Courier*, dealing with the issue of churches having ministers on their governing boards. With respect, I believe Mr. van der Woerd's fears are unwarranted.

I see little similarity between the AIDS Society of Ontario appealing to the public for funds and the alleged misuse of such funds and the fact that in some of our churches, the minister is one of the directors of the incorporated local church board.

I am not aware of any church conducting

a public fundraising campaign nor am I aware of any situation where the minister sets his own salary, let alone a case where the minister is paid an unconscionably large salary. If such practice exists anywhere, it should not wait for the office of the Public Guardian and Trustee to challenge it, it should be discontinued.

The Public Guardian and Trustee does not act on its own initiative but, as Mr. van der Woerd points out, it is complaint driven. I disagree however that any simple

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Letter/Environment

Fears about ministers and boards unwarranted

...continued from page 5

complaint will goad the Trustee's office into action. I seriously doubt that any member of the public can legitimately complain about the affairs of a "membership organization" that is more like a "private" charity than a "public" charity. In my opinion, the Public Guardian and Trustee would be extremely reluctant to challenge a local church's status merely because its minister was a member of its governing board. The old practice of having a minister absent himself from the debate and decision-making process in matters concerning the minister's salary is prudent and should continue.

Unproven conclusion

I have discussed the matter with the Public Guardian and Trustee's office on numerous occasions. I believe Mr. van der Woerd's fears are substantially unfounded. To refer to the practice of having a minister on the governing board of a church as "breaching the law" is in my opinion an unnecessarily harsh

and unproven conclusion of law. I know of no statute law or common law principle clearly stating that "private charities" such as our local churches have no discretion in this matter. Perhaps one day a Canadian court will address the issue directly. When and if it does, it is in my opinion quite possible that the practice of having the minister sit on the governing board of a church, in the absence of any abuse, may well be upheld.

Mr. van der Woerd may be right when he states that "removing ministers from governing boards" is an "improvement for both the ministers and congregation." There are many who disagree. My point is that I believe Mr. van der Woerd's allegation that "American administrators are encouraging" Canadians to disregard a law, and his implied threat that the charitable status of a church may be lost simply because a minister is a member of its governing board are unfair and overstated:

W. G. Posthumus
Toronto

Bothered by photo

I read with interest your paper and my husband has subscribed for many years since he was here in Canada. Perhaps he is even a charter subscriber, except we had to let it go a short while one time when he was laid off.

I was bothered by what I felt was a misrepresentation by a picture you had on Page 7 of your Dec. 10 issue. The picture seems to try to portray a beggar from Peru as you refer to that story in the lines under the picture. The lady with the child in a cradle board is a Navajo Indian from New Mexico or Arizona in the States. She is

wearing lovely jewelry that is native to that area. Making her out to be a beggar to me is a very big put down.

I lived and my father worked with the Navajo Indians for 13 years over 40 years ago. This lady represents how many of the women dressed at that time. The work with the Navajo Indians in New Mexico has been going on for over 100 years and many Christians live in that area now. May the Lord be praised for how he works in many lives throughout the world.

Marilyn Wubbenhorst

News

70,000 young Christians in snow-covered Budapest

Stefan J. Bos, Eastern Europe Correspondent, ASSIST News Service

BUDAPEST, HUNGARY (ANS) — Prayers and songs echoed throughout the Budapest Exhibition Centre where an estimated 70,000 young people from as far away as Siberia arrived Friday, December 28 to seek Christian answers for a world in turmoil.

Many of them, carrying rucksacks and musical instruments, came by special trains and buses for the five-day meeting, organized by the France based ecumenical Taizé community.

The biggest group consisted of about 26,000 Polish youth, who arrived in the snow covered Hungarian capital to participate in what has been called "a pilgrimage of trust" at a time of global terrorism.

Discussions about real love were an important part of the meeting, Taizé brothers said. Brother Roger, who founded the Taizé community in 1940, urged the thousands of participants to "love and say it with your life."

Speaking at the opening service in one of the main exhibition halls between Christmas trees and biblical paintings, Brother Roger

warned that love does not go without forgiveness. He referred to an encounter he had with a nine-year-old boy.

"That small boy said to me: 'My father left my family. I never see him, but I still love him. And every day I pray for him.'

"This little boy," he added, "shows the forgiveness described in the Gospel."

Opportunity to reconcile

Brother Emile of Taizé, told ASSIST News Service that forgiveness is especially important in Eastern Europe. After a decade of

war in the Balkans, he said, Croats, Serbs and Bosnians will have an opportunity to reconcile their differences.

"Difference can be celebrated. I think that is the hope of this meeting: that people will develop this sense of communion."

Brother Emile acknowledged that some have criticized his community for being ecumenical. "But let me make clear that our basis is the joy that Jesus Christ has risen."

His hopes were also reflected by Archbishop George Carey of Canterbury, who urged young people to draw closer to God during

the Budapest gathering. "As you return from your pilgrimage, be inspired to serve the communities where you live for the sake of Christ and His Kingdom of justice and peace," he wrote in a letter.

Twenty-two year old Andre Valint from Slovakia said he wanted to meet people to renew his faith in Christ. "I hope to find God here," said Valint, a devout Catholic. He and most other participants stayed in schools and with thousands of Hungarian families, many of whom are not Christians but who were attracted by the theme of trust in a time of terrorism.

Finding ecological virtue

Creation waits...

John Wood



(*Earthkeeping in the '90s*, 1991) and by Hoezee (*Remember Creation*, 1998) are just two of many examples. And into this mix of ethical thinking a new twist has been added by another Christian thinker. In his new book, *For the Beauty of the Earth* (Baker, 2001) Steven Bouma-Prediger has given us grist for mental grinding in this New Year. He offers up a means for practicing virtuous living.

"Virtue," it has been said, "is an acquired human quality." The Christian environmental movement has given us a strong focus on changing our behavior. The ethics of what we do has been in the spotlight. But thoughtful people recognize that it takes more than a 'to do' list to make the substantial changes that are needed. We are facing a fundamental question of morality. Merely addressing the technical aspects of pollution is not enough.

A case of moral amnesia?

What is bothering us, in a fine phrase from Alistair McIntyre, is a case of "moral amnesia". We have a vague awareness that we are lacking the old-fashioned virtues that once carried society forward. The individualism and acquisitiveness celebrated by market economics is not enough. And a list of things to do will not solve our dilemma. Rules and obligations are important, but not sufficient. And simply raising the fear factor by stating the unpleasant consequences of our actions does not work either. The environmental community has majored in both of these failed strategies.

Now then shall we do? According to Bouma-Prediger, we must ask, "What kind of people should we be?" Or more precisely, "What is virtue? And what particular virtues arise from a biblically-informed Christian ecological ethic?"

Now, here is a new way of thinking about the earth that should keep us well into the New Year.



John R. Wood teaches environmental science at The King's University College, Edmonton.

JANUARY 14, 2001

Arts/Media

Film Review

The Lord of the Rings and the culture wars

Harry der Nederlanden

One of the noteworthy and revealing developments in the realm of media over these past couple of months has been the reaction by Christians across North America to two films produced mainly for children. They are similar in many ways: they are both based on very popular books that can be classified as fantasies, their central characters are children or child-like, they are filled with magic, wizards and witches, and their plots are wholly unrealistic, fabulous. I am, of course, talking about the films *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* and *The Lord of the Rings*.

The first has been vehemently condemned as leading children into the occult and into witchcraft and the second has been hailed as the epitome of Christian film-making. Recently the late night news showed Christian parents publicly burning Harry Potter books at the urging of their pastor. One televangelist is selling a video which purports to expose the evils of the Harry Potter books and film.

Magic seen in a different light

Books, popular and academic, discussing Tolkien's mythical world have, of course, been around for many years and in increasing numbers. *The Lord of the Rings* is often discussed in tandem with C.S. Lewis' Narnia Tales and the works of Charles Williams and George McDonald. In Harry Potter, the magic and the occult are



Frodo presents the mysterious ring to the Council of Elrond, in beautiful Rivendell.

considered harmful and insidious; whereas, in *The Lord of the Rings* it supposedly opens up our one-dimensional minds to a world with several levels and suffused with mystery.

Such a strong contrast strikes me as a form of cultural fundamentalism. I think parents can safely take their children to both movies without fear that their children will fly away on broomsticks or that they will wander off with a short sword in search of Orcs.

No definite ending

I saw *The Lord of the Rings* on New Year's Eve, when I figured there wouldn't be much of a line-up, and my wife and I enjoyed it hugely, although my tender behind told me the film was much too long. Actually, it is only the first installment of a series of three, so it really cannot be said to have an ending. It stops long before the heroes have reached their destination. If I didn't already know the story, I'd say the odds are stacked heavily against them.

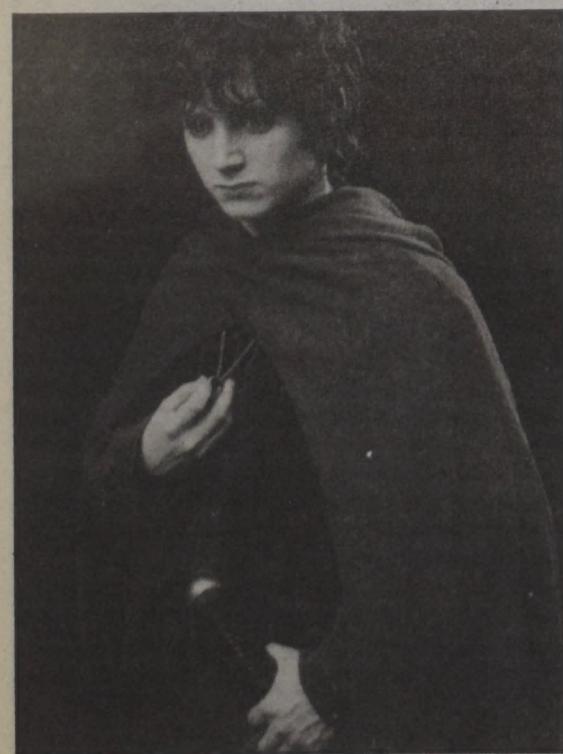
The Lord of the Rings is, as you've probably heard already, a very well-made film. It is well-acted, and the different

kinds of beings – wizards, elves, dwarves and hobbits – are brought to life as wonderfully believable creatures. Even more astounding to the eye are the different realms to which the film takes us; they are rendered in incredible detail. The Shire, where the hobbits live in underground burrows with round doors and rooms like vaulted tunnels, conveys the sort of coziness and domesticity and contentment I associate with the world of the Inklings (the C.S. Lewis circle of which Tolkien was part) themselves.

The subterranean chasms, like mine shafts hundreds of feet deep, in which the slimy Orcs prepare for war are as terrifying as the depictions of hell by Hieronymus Bosch. The computer-generated graphics merge with real landscapes in a seamless way. I hope the artists got their fair share of the \$270 million spent on the production; they deserve it. The monsters and Orcs are horribly realistic and may make this film far more frightening to younger children than *Harry Potter*, although kids have seen so many monsters on T.V. that few are liable to get nightmares from them.

Ring has power to enslave

The story line of *The Lord of the Rings*, as most of you probably know, revolves around a ring with awesome magical powers, but it is a ring whose real master is the evil Sauron, who would use its power to defeat and subjugate all the races of Middle-earth – hobbits, elves, dwarves and humans. The ring is a dangerous possession. All who come near it are tempted by the power that emanates from it, for it is not a power that can be used for good ends, it is a power that corrupts and enslaves.



Frodo (portrayed by Elijah Wood), a wide-eyed, innocent and peace-loving hobbit.

are left staring out over a desolate, forbidding landscape, infested with blood-thirsty Orcs, which is the next stage of their journey.

Most viewers will be eager to accompany them on their long and dangerous journey, but I suspect that it will become a bit repetitive. Because the film must condense the trilogy, we are given one pursuit or fight scene after another. Huge and horrible monsters attack the travelers and they are beset by hordes of Orcs. The evil power of Sauron is so overwhelming and pervasive that a sense of tragedy and doom overshadows Middle-earth and the travelers. If Frodo's fellows didn't possess superhuman powers as warriors, chopping and hacking through entire legions of Orcs, Frodo wouldn't have gotten very far. There are parts of this film that remind me of some of the popular video games that give you one monster after another to battle and that pass the victor on to another, more difficult level to face more horrific challenges.

Closer to Norse mythology

Commentators point to the humbleness of the hero Frodo as proof that the story is built around Christian virtue, and they quote Gandalf's brief homily on the virtue of pity. But I don't find the film's mood of the loss of a past greatness and the picture of a world overrun by vicious, bloodthirsty creatures particularly Christian. The mood is closer to that of Celtic and Norse mythology. There is little or no sense of the Kingdom of God. It takes a willful act of interpretation in which we bring to bear a great deal of information from outside the film to bring out those themes that converge with Christianity.

That is the sort of activity we must bring to all our reading and viewing. We must be active interpreters no matter who the author. Many who see this film will discern nothing Christian in it. Those who have immersed themselves in the vast and intricate mythological cosmos that Tolkien has created in his books will undoubtedly disagree, and will be more adept at pointing out the Christian analogies. And that's great.

It is my (paradoxical) sense that it takes no less work to eke out Christian meanings from this film than from *The Name of the Rose*, *American Beauty* or *Moulin Rouge* – none of which are intended to convey Christian themes.

Church

Nigerian state government commission orders arrests of church leaders

Obed Minchakpu

KADUNA, Nigeria (Compass) — The Commission of Inquiry instituted by the Kaduna state government in northern Nigeria to investigate the causes of religious riots that rocked the state in February and May, 2000, has recommended the arrest of several top Christian leaders.

The leaders included Dr. Peter Jatau, archbishop of Nigeria's Catholic Church and chairperson of the northern chapter of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN); the secretary general of CAN, Mr. Saidu Dogo; Archbishop Benjamin Achigili of the Methodist Church of Nigeria; and eleven other Christian leaders.

The commission said it discovered an official letter written and signed by the Christian leaders directing Christians in the state to embark on violence to protest the government's decision to implement the Islamic legal code, sharia, in Kaduna state.

Christian leaders accused

The report, which was made public by the state government on Nov. 12, 2001, indicted the Christian leaders for allegedly fueling the religious disturbances. It recommended that each be reprimanded and that further police investigations on them and their

churches be made.

Violence erupted in Kaduna city and other parts of the state on Feb. 21, 2000, when Christians took to the streets to protest the government plan to introduce the Islamic legal code. Muslims reacted with stone throwing.

"The stoning of the Christian demonstrators by some Muslims was part of the immediate cause of the riot in Kaduna and environs," said the commission's report. It added, "The commission found out that sharia became a topical issue in Nigeria as a result of Zamfara state government's enactment of sharia courts law, 1999, and sharia penal code law, 2000. Furthermore, the fact that it is misunderstood by some of those in support of it and those against it constituted a problem."

The commission said 1,295 persons were killed during the riots, and property worth more than 11 billion naira (\$10 million) was destroyed.

Christian leaders in Kaduna state said the allegations against them are baseless.

Archbishop Benjamin Achigili told Compass that there was never a time when they ordered Christians to engage in demonstrations, much less in violence against the implementation of sharia in Kaduna.

He said the letter referred to by the commission was written to ask Christians in the state to embark on fasting and prayers over the decision of the government to implement an Islamic law that violates the rights of Christians to practice their faith as guaranteed in the Nigerian Constitution.

"Christianity is a religion of peace and has respect for other religions, so we could not have done what they are claiming," Achigili said.

Saidu Dogo, while addressing a press conference in Kaduna on November 12, asked the Kaduna government for a public apology to Christians in the state. Dogo threatened to seek redress in court unless the government apologizes for what he termed an unprovoked attempt to cage Christian leaders.

"We will not take it kindly to any attempt to humiliate our leaders while government is shielding the real culprits of the riot. It is in this regard that we reject totally the white paper and strongly advise that if peace is really desired, no interest can be sacrificed to appease another. Only justice and fairness and equal treatment can create the enabling environment for a lasting peace," Dogo said.

He said the committee that drafted the investigative report was biased and flawed in

composition — four Muslims and one Christian.

"This glaring injustice shows that government is partisan in favor of Muslims and holds the

lives and property of Muslims as sacred while those of Christians can be expended with impunity," Dogo said.

Protestant churches face opposition in Ethiopia



A TESSORE SHOSTAL

Members of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church take part in a religious festival.

Geoff Stamp

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia (Compass) — A leading member of Ethiopia's Protestant church says that freedom to practice religion is "only constitutional." Yet despite ongoing persecution, Protestant churches are experiencing significant growth.

"During the former regime of communist dictator Mengistu Haile Mariam, the persecution came from the Marxist government authorities. Now we may have freedom on paper, but I can say that persecution has doubled and it is coming from the Orthodox Church and the Muslims," the church leader told Compass.

Throwing stones at churches

Even in the capital, Addis Ababa, there have been several recent incidents of people throwing stones at churches and Protestant worshipers. Farther from the capital, the threats of violence and incidents of persecution, especially stone throwing, increase.

In some areas, it has become common for people coming and going to the evangelical churches to be pelted with stones. The Full Gospel Church in Axum recently filed a complaint with the police asking them for protection against stone throwing by members of the Orthodox Church.

Over the last three years, there have been reports of churches being ordered to stop singing or praying together. Mission work in

some areas has provoked violent reactions, and some church leaders have been whipped and beaten. Whenever a rural church wants to bury one of its members, there seems to be more trouble.

At the end of August, Muslim extremists threw a bomb into the compound of the Full Gospel Church in Jijiga. No one was hurt. But in other incidents, worshipers

have been injured and some have been killed. Less than two years ago, the chairman of a church in the Awasa region was killed by a bomb blast.

Applications ignored

In the last 10 years, the authorities have granted land and building permission to the Orthodox Church and to the Muslims. When the evangelical churches apply for permission to build, their applications are ignored.

Even though evangelical and Pentecostal churches now constitute more than 17 per cent of the population, the government seems reluctant to recognize the rapid growth of these churches. Some believe it is to avoid angering the traditional Orthodox Church, which is quickly losing members to the more charismatic churches.

The evangelical and Pentecostal churches have set up an umbrella organization to represent them at the highest levels. The Evangelical Church Fellowship of Ethiopia (ECFE) was formed in 1992, but it is finding that recognition comes slowly. One official said that the authorities still try to deal directly with member churches, ignoring the ECFE, even though it now represents more than 10 million Christians.

Most church leaders who spoke to Compass did not want to be identified for fear of reprisal.

Rioting in Nigeria blamed for two deaths, vandalism of churches

ILORIN, Nigeria (EP) — Police suspect a mob of Muslim youths vandalized and burglarized four Christian churches in Ilorin, Nigeria.

Police acted quickly to disperse the mob from doing further damage and threatened swift action against any other perpetrators of violence Nov. 30. The four churches suffered damage to their windows, doors and electronic equipment and components from sound systems were stolen during the riots. Two vehicles in the vicinity were set on fire and three more were damaged.

Both Christian and Muslim leaders have called for peace in the city and have asked their followers not to engage in retaliatory attacks.

Violent clashes between Christians and Muslims have increased in the last year due to attempts by Muslim leaders to establish sharia, the Muslim code of conduct, into Nigerian law.

In a similar story, at least two Christians were killed and nine

churches vandalized when one thousand Muslims rioted for more than five hours in southwestern Nigeria. The rioting began Nov. 28 during a protest march in Osogbo, just before the visit of German evangelist Reinhard Bonnke.

Osogbo, capital of the Nigerian state of Osun, is populated by the Yoruba, a tribe evenly divided along religious lines and with a long tradition of religious tolerance.

Pastor's son killed

Of the two victims killed during the rioting, one was a pastor's son who had been spotted by Muslim youths putting up posters advertising the Bonnke event. According to eyewitnesses, he was targeted by Muslim assailants who forced their way into the family home,

strangled him, and then dragged his corpse out of the house.

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) reports that the riot was incited by a radical Muslim preacher Alhaji Adegbite and carried out by

members of an Islamic group from outside the state.

Traditional and religious leaders have condemned events in Osogbo. Oba Iyiola Matanmi, king of the Osogbo people, visited the affected area and issued a plea for calm. Alhaji Mustapha Ajisafe, chairman of the local league of Muslim leaders, disassociated the organization from the incident.

After visiting the vandalized churches the governor of Osun, Bisi Akande, a Muslim, praised the Christian community for exercising restraint. The governor gave assurances that those responsible for the violence would be brought to justice.

Local police have moved swiftly to arrest Alhaji Adegbite, and have also promised to upgrade security during the Bonnke rally.

Bonnke is no stranger to controversy and violent reaction, as 10 years ago hundreds of people died when Muslims protested against his presence in the predominantly Muslim town of Kano, Nigeria.

JANUARY 14, 2002

Church

Violence erupts in Sri Lanka, churches look to new PM to bring peace

Anto Akkara

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka (ENI) — In spite of church leaders' hopes that peace would follow December's elections in this island nation torn by years of ethnic conflict, renewed violence broke out today between rebel Tamil forces and the government.

At least 16 people have died in an attack by Tamil Tiger rebels on a military base and at a police station, and through return strikes by the Sri Lankan military forces, the BBC reported.

Just recently, Christian leaders had expressed optimism that Prime Minister Ranil Wickramasinghe,

sworn in on December 9, would seek national consensus in solving the ethnic conflict.

In the run-up to the election, Wickramasinghe's victorious United National Party (UNP) had promised to hold peace talks with Tamil militants. After the election, the UNP joined the Tamil parties

and the Sri Lankan Muslim Congress to create a majority coalition called the United National Front.

The defeat in the election of President Chandrika Kumaratunga's People's Alliance means that for the first time since 1994 the country has a president from one party and a prime minister from another.

Kumaratunga had from time to time proposed peace talks, it had also launched army offensives against Tamil rebels, the BBC reported.

In the run-up to the election, President Kumaratunga accused Wickramasinghe of being a spokesperson for Tamil militants. But even Buddhist-majority areas voted overwhelmingly for Wickramasinghe, Joseph told ENI, which showed that "people want peace desperately."

Based predominantly in the south, the Sinhalese account for more than 70 per cent of the nation's population of 19 million, while Tamils account for approximately 18 per cent.

In December, Father Damian Fernando, director of Caritas Sri Lanka, said: "There is a lot of hope and optimism around now. We pray that the good will for peace that has been clearly stated by the people in this election is carried for peaceful settlement at the earliest."

Interviewed in his office, Damian told ENI that "the voters have given a clear verdict against those clamoring for war." Political parties that had been opposed to a peace settlement with rebels had been "wiped out in the election, failing to win even in their strongholds."

A light for the gentiles

Joseph C. McLelland

The Star of Bethlehem has always posed a problem for me. It is a phenomenon that had little to do with the Jewish shepherds on Christmas Eve. It arises in the ("pagan") East as a guide for wealthy sages who practice astrology, as the Hebrews did not.

I received further light on the question from *The Star of Bethlehem* by Michael Molnar, an astronomer formerly with Rutgers University. It sheds new light on the Epiphany season: "the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles" symbolized by the Wise Men from the East.

Molnar reviews familiar theories that try to explain the phenomenon in the ancient sky: comet, supernova, miracle star. But if it were something so obvious, why didn't the people of Judea see it? He argues convincingly that the miracle lies not so much in the heavenly bodies as in the interpretive skills of ancient "astrologers," the sages and mathematicians of the classical age. The Jews did not see the star because they did not believe in astrology, but the Gentiles did, and read the sky correctly. Molnar describes his conclusion as a surprise to him too — to "this astronomer who does not believe in astrology."

Molnar's research reveals a conjunction of events in the Zodiac on April 17, 6 BC, that led astrologers to interpret a royal birth in Judea. Royal horoscopes featured the regal planet Jupiter along with the moon. On that date, their paths crossed in Aries, the sign of the House of Judea. *Astronomy* makes sense of Matthew's description of a star that "went before" the seers and "stood over" the house. *Astrology* interpreted the sign correctly.

Strictly a Gentile revelation

You see the point: this was strictly a Gentile revelation, geared to their distinctive way of seeing things. A form of revelation outside the Jewish covenant! An alternative preparation for the coming of Messiah! A Gentile reading of heavenly signs that hits the truth right on! Doesn't that challenge our traditional theology? These sages to the east of Judea read the signs of their times and journeyed to Jerusalem enquiring about the new-born King.

They brought fitting gifts: gold for a king, incense for a deity, myrrh for a sufferer. They complete the threefold chorus that hailed the holy birth — angels on high and, on earth, Jewish shepherds and faithful folk like Mary and Joseph and their circle. Angels announced the good news to Mary and to the shepherds, but the Zodiac was the messenger to the Gentiles.

They're our forebears, these non-Jews. They stand for all those outside Israel who waited on God, who saw however dimly or clearly the greatness of the Author of this universe. Source of

goodness, Companion in suffering. The Old Testament calls them "God-fearers"; Paul refers to them as people of conscience. Earlier, sages in Babylon had helped Jewish prophets define their understanding of divine light and salvation (Isaiah even calls Cyrus a "Messiah"). Later, Stoic and Platonic philosophers influenced New Testament authors and Church Fathers to refine their message of the faith and the works befitting followers of the Crucified. Gentile input, in other words, was considerable.

Divine Child anticipated by many

The heavenly signs symbolize the whole sweep of the Epiphany season from now to Ash Wednesday when Lent takes over in the Christian Year. Epiphany means light returning, the Servant of God appearing as the Savior of his people Israel — and as a light to the Gentiles as well, just as the "servant songs" in Isaiah promised: "I will give you as a light to the nations" (Isa. 42:53). It's a global revelation, intended for all humanity. It begins with Jewish Torah and Jewish history but overflows into the majority population. Its central sign of a divine Child was anticipated from sages like Vergil in the West to Far Eastern mystics and meditators.

My Barthian past balks at the "natural theology" involved. Especially when, today, astrology is not to be believed (We "see" constellations differently). Nevertheless, the biblical witness that Molnar exeges so well points us to a sign that only ancient Gentile astrologers could have interpreted properly, as they did. The proof is in the pudding: they reached Jerusalem guided by their own kind of knowledge and, there, they asked where the King was to be born, information restricted to Jewish prophecy.

If *Advent* refers us to the history of Jewish Messianic expectation, *Epiphany* is for Gentiles. In the lore of their mathematicians and astrologers lay a kind of knowledge that led their emissaries straight to Jerusalem with the right question to ask. Not natural theology but "special revelation" perhaps?

Let us Gentiles give thanks that the hopes and desires of the nations were answered in God's peculiar ways. Epiphany begins with heavenly lights and ends with transfigured Humanity. Behold the grace that gives both word and light, by which we are enlightened to see the many-splendored Truth! "O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!"

Joseph C. McLelland is professor emeritus of McGill University and The Presbyterian College, Montreal. He is also a contributing editor of The Presbyterian Record, where this article first appeared.

National reconciliation

The new prime minister delayed appointing a cabinet, holding a series of meetings with opposition parties in what was portrayed as an attempt to form a "government of national reconciliation."

Ebenezer Joseph, general secretary of the National Christian Council of Sri Lanka (NCCSL), said of the election result: "This is a very positive development. We hope this will help end the conflict forever."

The NCCSL is a forum of major Protestant churches including Anglicans, Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, the Dutch Reformed Church, the Church of South India and the Salvation Army.

Sri Lanka has been plagued by an ethnic conflict which has claimed more than 64,000 lives since 1983. Although the previous government under President

Roman astrologers saw a divine sign in double eclipse

NEW YORK (Zenit.org) — A U.S. astronomer claims he has found the first mention of the star of Bethlehem outside the Bible, the magazine *New Scientist* reports.

The reference to the star is in a fourth-century manuscript written by a Roman astrologer and Christian convert called Firmicus Maternus.

Michael Molnar, formerly of Rutgers University in New Jersey, is the originator of the idea that the star of Bethlehem was not a spectacular astronomical event such as a supernova or a comet but an obscure astrological one.

Still, the event would have been of great significance to ancient Roman astrologers. After studying the symbolism on Roman coins, he concluded that the "star" was in fact a double eclipse of Jupiter in a rare astrological conjunction that occurred in Aries on March 20, in the year 6 B.C., and again a month later on April 17.

Molnar believed that Roman

astrologers would have interpreted such an event as signifying the birth of a divine king in Judea. But he lacked proof. Now he says he has found it, in the *Mathesis*, a book written by Maternus in A.D. 334. Maternus described an astrological event involving an eclipse of Jupiter by the Moon in Aries, and said that it signified the birth of a divine king.

"Maternus did not mention Jesus' name," says Molnar. "But Roman astrology was a popular craze at the time and everyone reading the book would have known the reference was to Jesus and that the astrological event was the star of Bethlehem."

So why did Maternus not mention Jesus by name? According to Molnar, early Christians hated pagan beliefs and did not want to justify the biblical story with astrological speculation. The idea that the stars govern our fate, obviously contradicted belief in a Christian God who controlled the universe.

Book Review

The journey toward meaning

The Long Journey Home: A Guide to Your Search for the Meaning of Life

by O. S. Guinness

Reviewed by Stephen McGarvey

(Religion Today) — In his latest book, *The Long Journey Home*, Dr. O. S. Guinness tells of economist E. F. Schumacher's visit to St. Petersburg, Russia, when it was still under communist rule. Although he had a map of the city, he became lost. What he saw on his paper did not match what he saw right before his eyes — several huge Russian Orthodox churches. They weren't on the map, but Schumacher was almost certain of what street he was on. Schumacher's confusion was solved when a tourist guide explained that in the Soviet Union, they don't show churches on the maps.

Maps with holes in them

Life is often like this in America as well. Through school, college and career, people are handed maps to success with obvious holes in them. These holes are found where spiritual truths once stood. *The Long Journey Home* was written to fill in these holes in the map, to point people who are

searching for meaning in their lives toward what they know they've been missing.

Whenever people are faced with life-changing events, as they were on Sept. 11, they are forced to reassess the world they live in. Watching a tragedy as enormous as the deaths of thousands of innocent people will no doubt shock many Americans into a new search for significance in their lives. We've already seen the beginning of this search for healing and meaning as prayer returns to the public square [in the U.S.]. When disaster strikes, it isn't the atheists and agnostics we see on CNN, but rather, people of faith. In the coming months, it will be the job of Christians to point these new seekers in the right direction, toward the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Written for seekers

The Long Journey Home is an excellent tool for an unbeliever looking for life's meaning. The book is unique because it is written expressly for seekers. "You have yards of books you could never give to an unbeliever," Dr. Guinness tells Crosswalk.com. "They just wouldn't be interested." Indeed, most books on apologetics presume either the reader already has an interest in Christianity or is working on a seminary degree. *Journey*, however, assumes nothing beyond the fact that the seeker can read and he or she has decided that in some way, life should make sense.

An unfortunate aspect of American apologetics, according to Guinness, is that too many apologists speak only to Christians. "If

you look at the calendar of speeches of the best Christian speakers you will see about 80 per cent [of their speaking engagements] are to Christians; it's absurd. So I make a practice of speaking to seekers. There's no use preaching to the choir. It sounds so elementary, but it isn't done."

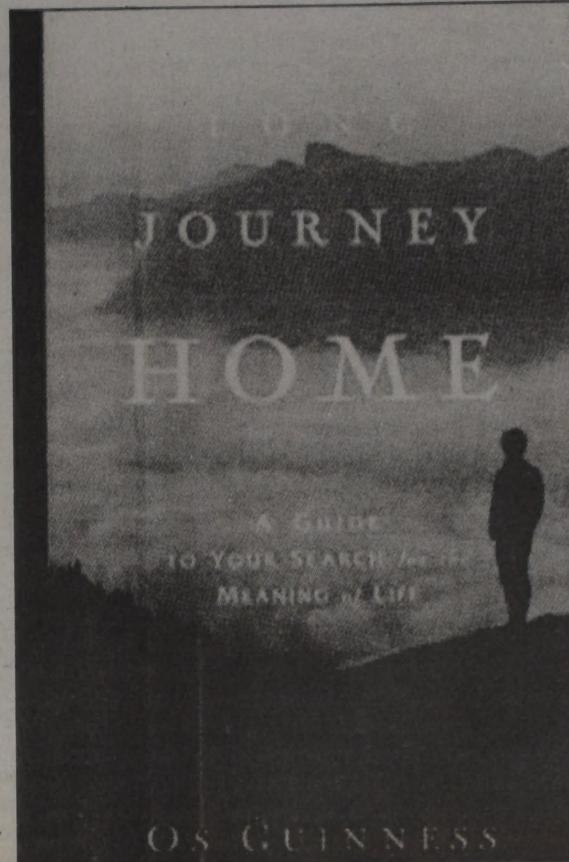
Fascinating anecdotes

This does not mean that there is nothing in *Journey* for Christian believers. On the contrary, Guinness' book shows Christians why they believe what they believe. Most Christians realize that at some point in their lives they made a huge leap of faith, yet most of them could not describe that faith to an unbeliever. *Journey* gives those believers fascinating anecdotes and examples of ways some of the world's greatest Christian thinkers expressed their faith.

Is religion only for ignorant people? Much of *The Long Journey Home* seeks to answer "not so." Guinness quotes writer Anne Lamott's experience growing up: "None of the adults in our circle 'believed.' Believing meant that you were stupid. Ignorant people believed, uncouth people believed ..." Guinness shows how many of the world's greatest thinkers, writers, artists, musicians, scientists, inventors, etc., were people of great faith. "My own focus is that I think restoring faith in Christ to its intellectual preeminence is one of the great needs of the American church," Guinness says. "Thinkers are the unreached people group in America." Guinness writes *Journey* in such a way that it is easy to understand, yet intellectually honest.

New approach to apologetics

In its effort to reach seekers, *The Long Journey Home* takes an interesting new approach to apologetics. Guinness combines the two prevailing views of apologetics (presuppositional and evidential) into one broader perspective, or what Guinness calls "the four stages of a thoughtful person's quest for meaning." Most Americans no longer have a worldview based on a Judeo-Christian understanding. Thus, a Christian must typically lay down much groundwork to help today's unbeliever understand the gospel



OS GUINNESS

message. *Journey* is divided into four "stages" that will help the Christian do this.

The first stage is the time for questions; it is the time in life when a person becomes a "seeker." It's the time when, as Guinness says, "life suddenly becomes a question mark." This "question mark" might take the form of a positive wonder, or it might be a life crisis. It depends on the person. Yet, according to Guinness, most apologetic approaches skip this phase. "We give answers before people have questions," he says.

Time for answers

Stage two is the time for answers. Here Guinness compares the three big families of faith: Eastern, Secular, and Biblical. "Many people get bogged down looking at the thousand and one religions in America," he says. "But you can focus them down because all faiths fit into these three categories. They are families in the sense that they have a family resemblance and they go to the same sources of ultimate reality." The book explains that Eastern religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, New Age) go back to an impersonal god. Secular religions (atheism, agnosticism, naturalism) believe the ultimate source of reality is chance plus time plus matter. The Biblical family (Judaism, Islam, Christianity) find their source in an infinite and personal God. *Journey* compares the families and shows why Christianity is superior. This is the pre-

suppositional part of the book.

Step three in *Journey*'s construct is the time for evidences. Is there a way to prove what we say is true? Yet, unlike the typical evidential approach to apologetics, Guinness approaches the search for evidence of faith with proofs first, rather than disproofs. "We must have both presuppositions and evidences together flowing out of the first step, questioning. The polarization between the two is absolutely hysterical," he says. "It's time we transcended the controversy."

Time for commitment

The fourth and last section of the book addresses the time for commitment. When all these things are gathered up, commitment is the next step. Guinness says we see two paradoxical components in all true conversions. One is a great sense of individual responsibility. Never does a human being feel more himself or herself than when he makes the decision of faith. On the other hand, he senses that it's not him, but God doing it. As Guinness puts it, "At the previous levels of search we think we are seeking, searching, sifting and suddenly we discover that we've been found."

Do not neglect the journey

The Long Journey Home ends with a challenge to the post-modern reader. Do not neglect the journey. Too many Christians, according to Dr. Guinness, say that once you've got your faith, you've arrived. "They ignore the journey, they ignore the mystery," he says. "There's a lot of journey in life, ups and downs, disasters and triumphs. We haven't 'arrived,' even though we believe in Christ." Secularists are the opposite. You never really 'arrive' in life, the journey is all there is. "That's rubbish, too, because you only travel if you're traveling homeward," Guinness says. "The Biblical position is a wonderful middle. When we meet Christ but we're still wayfarers, we're booked, but there's a lot of journeying till we get home. So coming to faith is only the beginning of the journey home, and it only ends when we get home to the Father."

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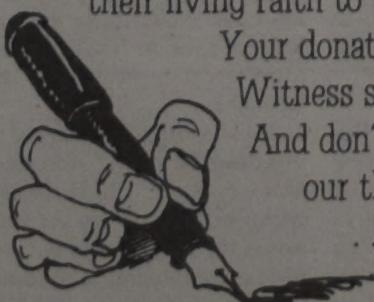
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JANUARY 14, 2002

News/Psychology

Company cleans environment using natural processes



COURTESY HOBBS MILLER MAAT

Placement of PCB contaminated soil in biopiles in Powell River, B.C., by HMM staff.

Alan Doerksen

OAKVILLE, Ont. — An Oakville-based company is using bacteria to break down chemical waste and is working on a way to clean up radioactive waste. For Derk Maat, a co-founder and principal of the company, cleaning the environment has a direct connection with his faith.

In 1994, Maat and several partners started Hobbs Miller Maat (HMM) Inc. Environmental Technology Systems. But Maat has been interested in cleaning the environment for 30 years. That interest arises from his Christian faith, and Maat says, "I've seen that connection since the day I graduated from the University of Waterloo in 1972.... I've always had a vision for restoring the environment." Maat is a member and chair of

council at Community CRC of Meadowvale, Ont.

Maat recalls an older scientist from Florida who was a Christian, who told him that for every man-made contaminant there is a God-given solution for cleaning it up. Now, Maat's company is looking for those solutions.

Pioneering work

Maat believes his company has done pioneering work in cleaning up waste in an environmentally-friendly way. "Ten years ago, no one knew bacteria could break down oil," he observes. Now his company is doing just that, cleaning up land polluted by oil, diesel, pesticides and herbicides, and even PCBs.

Leo Sanders, a microbiologist with HMM, has developed a combination of 50 strains of bacteria and fungus which break down PCBs into their final end products, according to the company's website.

HMM works with some oil wells, cleaning up the sludge that comes from deep underground, and which Maat says is "very bad for the environment." Using 50 strains of bacteria, the company's technology is able to convert pollutants into carbon dioxide and water, he explains.

Microbes used by HMM are not genetically engineered. The company has identified at contaminated sites around the world some of the microbes it uses, and has studied which ones are most effective at breaking down

contaminants into environmentally-safe byproducts.

Now the company is doing research on ways to break down radioactive waste as well, which would be a major breakthrough.

State-of-the-art approach

HMM describes itself as being unique as a "bioremedial technology company" because it has developed "a unique, proven, state-of-the-art integrated approach to restoring and improving the environmental quality of contaminated soils and ground water. The HMM approach involves integration of microbiology [and] biochemistry with unique engineered bioproduct application and treatment solutions to solve client needs at the lowest possible cost and shortest possible time frame."

Breaking down contaminants

Breaking down chlorinated contaminants is one task HMM does, using a three-step process. First, a "surfactant" is used to pre-treat polluted soil with enzymes and microbes. This process loosens the bond between the soil and contaminant. Next, HMM enzymes, produced by several types of bacteria and fungi, are applied. Finally, the contaminants degrade biologically, because the enzymes cause reactions that use oxygen to break down chlorinated molecules into carbon dioxide, water and chloride.

So far, HMM is doing 90 per cent of its work in Canada, along



COURTESY DERK MAAT

Derk Maat

A post-modern sit-in?

Getting Unstuck

Arlene Van Hove

"And they sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was very great." Job, 2:13

Job's friends have rarely received good press coverage from biblical commentators. They have been portrayed mainly as critical and judgmental of Job's situation. Not much has been said about their ability to sit with their friend as described in the above text.

Imagine sitting there for seven days and seven nights and not speaking! How would something like that fit in our postmodern "information/fix-it age?"

Stirrings of the soul

Job's misfortunes may be different from someone who is struggling with ongoing clinical depression, however, the need for support is the same. In any case, we could not do otherwise when we read the following painful stirrings of the soul:

*Step by step I grope along, from day to day I stumble on
On the verge of great despair, bowed down by burdens that I bear
So hard for me to find the way, the sky ahead looks dark and gray
The trail so rough and full of holes, it seems I'll never reach my goals*

*The mountain ahead looks awful steep, the canyon beside the trail
so deep
Nothing but darkness way down there, a place of hopelessness and despair*

*I wonder what I'm doing here, for me the way is not so clear
I can't go on, I've had enough, the way for me is way too tough*

*And like a stone my spirit sinks, and suddenly I'm on the brink
For me the awful canyon waits, reaching out with jaws of hate
Echoes of doom rise from below, struggling feebly against the foe
I give up and just cry out, of being saved I have my doubts!*

Author: Anonymous

What would you like to say to the author? Especially in light of the last sentence? How difficult would it be for you to keep silent and just accept the author where she or he is coming from?

First step towards healing

What can we learn from Job's friends when they sat with him for seven days and seven nights? What were they trying to convey to him during that time? Could their silence have been more helpful than their eventual words?

The first step towards emotional healing is to be understood, accepted and affirmed by another person. We do not need a lot of words to make that happen. By sitting together in understanding and acceptance, we begin our journey of healing. Furthermore, as in the story of Job, we may find God lurking in the shadows waiting for us to call on Him.



Arlene Van Hove is a psychotherapist with Cascade Christian Counselling Association in Surrey, B.C.

with some work in Michigan and Florida. The company is exploring expansion into other countries, and is getting inquiries about its services from around the world, reports Maat.

Recent projects for HMM included cleaning up spilled jet fuel at the Vancouver airport, cleaning up sludge at an oil drilling site in

northern Alberta, and paint solvent decontamination in Toronto. The company is able to do its work either on-site or off-site. HMM develops, manufactures and designs all of the biological processes and products that it uses.

Environmentalists: How to tell the bad ones from the good

Jon Dykstra

In 1997, while completing a science fair presentation, 14-year-old Nathan Zohner devised a way to test for bad environmentalists. The first part of his presentation was on the dangers of dihydrogen monoxide — this chemical is a major component of acid rain, can cause severe burns in its gaseous form, and is often lethal when accidentally inhaled. After explaining these risks, Nathan surveyed his listeners and asked how many of them would support a ban of this hazardous chemical. Of the 50 people he surveyed, 43 supported a ban, 6 were unsure, and only one realized that dihydrogen monoxide is H₂O, or water.¹

Forty-three people wanted to ban water. Let's forget for the moment that this works out to an amazing 86 per cent of the respondents. Right now let's just focus on the fact that at least 43 people in the world thought that banning water was indeed a good idea. These 43 people are bad environmentalists.

Marks of a baddie

Some readers might object at this point and argue these people aren't actually bad environmentalists — they were just tricked.

But how were they tricked? Nathan never lied to them, and never even exaggerated the truth. He told them the chemical's true hazards: water is a major component of acid rain, it can cause severe burns in its gaseous form, and drowning (accidentally inhaling water) is often lethal. Yes, it's true they wouldn't have banned water if they had known it was water, but the point is they were willing to ban a very useful chemical based on very limited information. That makes them bad environmentalists.

And they aren't the only ones. Bad environmentalists abound, and some of them are very influential. Before Christians jump on the environmental bandwagon they should be sure the people they listen to are actually the good environmentalists. Telling the difference between the good and bad ones can often be very hard, but the "baddies" have at least a couple of flaws that observant Christians should be able to spot.

1. They make decisions based only on the dangers of use

Nathan Zohner's 43 bad environmentalists were ready to ban a chemical after only hearing about its hazards. Would they have come to a different conclusion if they



MARTIN ROGERS, FPG

Crop-dusting: the odds are, when you hear the word DDT, you don't think of a beneficial chemical. But if you factor in both the hazards and the benefits DDT seems to be a clear winner, writes Dykstra.

had also heard about dihydrogen monoxide's many benefits? Just imagine if Nathan had told them that yes, it can be lethal when inhaled, but on the other hand, if man is deprived of it for as little as three days, he will die. Hmm...this dihydrogen monoxide sounds like a pretty important chemical, doesn't it? They wouldn't need to have known it was actually water to come to a different conclusion; they just needed to know about its benefits.

Only hazards emphasized

But far too often environmentalists emphasize only the hazards. DDT is perhaps the most striking example. This chemical has been vilified for the last number of decades and yet since its commercial introduction in 1944 it has been credited with saving between 100 million² and 500 million³ lives. Though it is useful as a general insecticide, its most impressive results came when it was used to stop mosquito born diseases like malaria. In 1948, for example, Ceylon (Sri Lanka) had 2,800,000 reported cases of malaria. In 1962 large-scale DDT programs had reduced that to only 31 cases.⁴ Results like this garnered Dr. Paul Muller, the Swiss chemists who patented DDT as a contact insecticide, the Nobel Prize in medicine.

But the odds are, when you hear the word DDT, you don't think of a beneficial chemical. You are more likely to recall the accusations leveled against the chemical in the 1960s. Environmentalists back then tried to get DDT banned, claiming it:

1. was harmful to bird populations, because it caused a thinning of their egg shells;
2. was persistent in the environment and didn't break down quickly;

3. was a cause of human disease since it built up in human fatty tissues.

There was some merit to these claims, particularly the first one, but there was a good deal of hype to these claims as well. Even as U.S. bird populations were supposed to be suffering due to DDT spraying, the Audubon Society was noting an upward trend in the numbers of most birds.⁵ The persistence of DDT in the environment was both a hazard as well as a benefit, as it meant the chemical didn't need to be sprayed as often. It was true that DDT did build up in the fatty tissues of animals and humans, but only to very low levels that were not hazardous.⁶

DDT cheapest way to fight malaria

The point here is not to argue that DDT is harmless. Its use does seem to have some impact on birds, and here in the western world we can probably afford to use other methods that are safer to birds. But the move to ban this chemical is a worldwide movement. In 1963, the last year Ceylon had wide scale DDT spraying, malaria cases had dropped to 17. Then they stopped and by 1969, only 6 years later, the number of cases had risen back to 2,500,000. India used DDT to bring their cases of malaria down from an estimated 75 million in 1951 to only 50,000 cases in 1961. But then they reduced their use of DDT and by 1977 the number of malaria cases had risen to at least 30 million.⁷

Worldwide there are between 300 million and 500 million cases of malaria each year. There are 2.7 million deaths annually.⁸ Even if you accept all of the claims made about the hazards of DDT, even if you believe it does cause harm to birds, does persist in the

environment, and may be a contributing factor in some cancers, DDT is still the cheapest and one of the most effective means of fighting malaria. If you factor in both the hazards and the benefits DDT seems to be a clear winner. But of course, if you just focus on the hazards even water should be banned.

2. They view the world as a closed system with limited resources

In 1980 two prominent environmentalists, Julian Simon and Paul Ehrlich, made a remarkable bet. The bet itself was fairly straightforward — Simon bet Ehrlich that any five metals Ehrlich chose would in ten years time be cheaper than they were in 1980.⁹ The remarkable part was the motivation behind this bet. Simon and Ehrlich had two very different views of the world's resources, and the bet was a way for them to wager on whose view was right.

Ehrlich thought the world's resources were finite and limited, and as we used them, we were getting closer and closer to the point where we would run out of them. The predictions of doom you frequently hear in the newspapers are usually based on this worldview. As resources became more and more rare, they should become more and more expensive, so Ehrlich was sure the five metals would be more expensive in 10 years time. Simon, on the other hand, had a much more optimistic view of the situation. Rather than running out of resources, Simon was sure the opposite was true. He was so optimistic he let Ehrlich choose the metals (copper, chromium, nickel, tin and tungsten) they would wager on. It didn't matter what the specific resources were, he was confident they would be more plentiful, and therefore cheaper in 10 years.

Well, when 1990 rolled around Simon emerged the winner, and by a landslide. All five metals had dropped in price, chromium by five per cent and tin by an amazing 74 per cent.¹⁰ But even as Simon emerged the clear winner, it was less clear how he won. Ehrlich, for example, conceded he lost the bet, but refused to concede that Simon's view of the world had beaten his worldview. Simon's optimistic worldview just didn't seem to make sense. How can the world's resources keep increasing even as we keep consuming nonrenewable resources?

The world's resources can keep increasing, because man can create new resources. For

example, in Alberta there are huge oil sands deposits that were absolutely useless to mankind until quite recently. Then someone figured out a way to separate out the oil and suddenly Alberta had vast new oil sources. Yes, the oil was always there, but it wasn't a resource until man's ingenuity figured out a way to get at it.

Man can create resources in another way as well. One of the more interesting examples of this has to do with copper, which was an important component of phone lines. As the number of phones, faxes and computer modems increased, the number of phone lines increased as well. The cost of the copper in all these phone lines started becoming a concern for phone companies, so they began to investigate cheaper ways of transmitting the phone signals. Now, instead of copper, many phone systems use fiber optic lines made of glass. And glass is made of sand. Man's ingenuity turned common sand into a resource that can be used to replace the more limited resource of copper. And these "sand" telephone lines can now be used to transmit hundreds of times more information than the old copper lines ever could.¹¹

So the most important resource God has given us is ingenuity, and it is limitless.

Conclusion

This article is not an attempt to proclaim that all is right in the world. We live in a fallen world and that evil extends into environmental matters as well. People pollute; it is in our nature to deface and abuse this planet.

But things are also not as bad as they are sometimes made out to be.

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Jon Dykstra is the editor of the magazine Reformed Perspective and lives in Edmonton, Alberta.

JANUARY 14, 2001

Language

Those words we speak

Ron de Boer

I once told a friend that when I hear sentences spoken, I see them as if they are being stamped onto the page of a typewriter. When I hear a particularly excellent speaker — like British Prime Minister Tony Blair — I can see the words being put down on the blank sheet of my imagination, punctuation and all. I don't just hear words, I *see* them. Didn't everyone? He said he didn't, that I was likely the only one. He called me weird.

He spelled it wrong when he said it.

All of us can probably remember a time when we cast out a sentence we wish we could reel in the moment it came out.

While perhaps nobody else sees words when they're spoken, one thing is for sure, we remember words, and all of us can probably remember a time when we cast out a sentence we wish we could reel in the moment it came out. Sometimes our harsh words resonate long into our lives.

The flaming arrow

I'm thinking of the Wilson brothers of my childhood. If there was one sentence I wish I could highlight and delete from the lifetime of words I've typed into the clean thin air, it would be the flaming arrow I shot toward a whole family of Wilsons on a summer day of my childhood.

There were two gangs in Keady back in the 70s. Ours — Dave, Gord, Doug, me and sometimes Wade-from-the-trailer-park. And there was the Wilsons — Dave, Larry and Everett and sometimes Wade-from-the-trailer-park.

Keady was a farming town with a general store, owned by the Wilson family, a BP gas station, owned by our nearly blind school bus driver, the Keady arena, the trailer park, and the livestock market, where Mennonites and farmers from as far away as Chatsworth came to sell produce and livestock every Tuesday.

Keady was like New York City on the Tuesdays when the market came to town. We kids would hop on our bikes and spend the day listening to the auctioneers, smelling the fried onions from the lunch counter and petting the goats before they were sold and loaded onto trucks with home-made racks on the back.

The Keady store, a little orange



HARRY DER NEDERLANDEN ILLUSTRATION

brick square on the corner of the Four-Way stop, was two doors down from the market — separated only by the big United church. The field between the Wilson's store and the church was the battleground between our gang, the *Bruins* (it was right after they won the Stanley Cup), and the Wilson gang, the *Wilsons*.

A reason to exist

The Wilsons didn't really consider themselves a gang. We more or less fabricated a bloody rivalry with them in the long hours we spent in one of our barns having gang meetings — it gave our gang a reason to exist. We would challenge them to sports events like road hockey or 500, and beat them every time — mostly because we were the only ones keeping score. If the Wilsons didn't have enough Wilsons for a game, we gave them Wade-from-the-trailer-park, who didn't seem to mind being the enemy for a given afternoon.

One summer day — the afternoon of my verbal flaming arrow — we challenged the Wilsons to a soccer match beside their store. Whichever gang lost would have to pay the other gang a dollar. Two rocks were dropped on each end for goalposts and the gravel shoulder of the county road served as the out-of-bounds line; nobody wanted to get hit by a dump truck hauling sand to Desboro.

We scored first, but the Wilsons tied the game soon after. After several arguments about whether or not a ball went over the post and both teams scoring goals in the double digits, the long shadows of the Keady United church fell onto our field. It was getting late. Most of us had to get home for chores and supper.

Larry declared — and we all agreed — "next goal wins." We kicked up dust for another few minutes before Doug-from-our-gang scored to give us sweet victory.

After clapping each other on the back, we faced the Wilsons and demanded our dollar. They said they didn't have a dollar.

A deal's a deal

We said we wanted our dollar. A deal's a deal. If they'd won, they'd want their dollar, you could be sure of that. Give us our dollar.

Again, they said they didn't have a dollar.

The patches on Everett's pants should have told us to back off and go home; the knots in Larry's hair, which hung in his eyes, should have tipped us off that the Wilson's had probably never had a dollar in their pockets ever. But we were kids — we didn't notice who was rich or poor or whose father had a job and whose didn't.

We didn't let it go.

As the Wilsons began

slouching off to the back of the store where they lived, we demanded our dollar again. This time they said they'd pay us the next day.

We didn't believe them, of course, and as we communicated our reservations about letting them off that easy, I, in a voice that rang out in the still summer breeze, said, "I'll bet you won't pay BECAUSE EVERYONE KNOWS YOU CAN'T TRUST A WILSON!"

There was a moment when the words just hung there.

Even the guys from my gang seemed to look my way in

slow motion. A paused moment on the television show of life.

'How dare you!'

From behind us we heard a sort of squeal then the slam of the screen door against the side of the store. Before we could whirl around, Mrs. Wilson — mother of the Wilson gang — heaved her way onto the side porch and then down the rickety stairs which barely held her weight.

"How dare you!" she screamed. "How dare you talk to my boys like that. Never trust a Wilson! Never trust a Wilson! How dare you!"

We, of course, were petrified. Both gangs froze in tableau. Nobody dared move. When Mrs. Wilson finally made it to the third and last step to the grass, she launched a diatribe and then a threat I'll never forget.

"Ever since we came to this town," she screamed, looking at each of us, "nobody's accepted us. Nobody's friendly to us. Everybody picks on the boys. Never trust a Wilson. How could you know you can't trust a Wilson? How could you?" Her voice cracked on the word could.

After a lengthy pause and after considering her three sons, who stood with their heads down as if it was their fault they were Wilsons, she pointed her finger at us. "I'm calling every one of your parents. Every one of them." She turned

and thumped up the stairs and disappeared into the store.

We hopped on our bikes and tore home, the devil's wind at our heels.

Strange little coincidences

Life has its strange little coincidences when you're a kid. If you sneaked matches behind the barn, that'd be the exact time when your father decided to move the tractor behind the barn. If you came into the kitchen to slip a piece of bread out of the bag before supper, that's the exact time your mother came downstairs from the bedroom she was cleaning. Parents seem to sniff something, and their natural instinct brings them straight to the source of the scent.

So it was with my mother. When we came into the kitchen of our farm house, she was getting her purse from the pantry shelf. "Oh, good, you're home," she said. "You'll have to come with me to the Keady Store to get some things for supper."

I glanced at my brother, the hairs standing up on the back of my neck. We told my mother we'd rather stay home.

"You're not old enough to stay home," she said in words that sounded like, "Don't be an idiot; of course you're coming with me to see the Executioner."

We slunk into the back seat of the Buick and listened to the ominous sound of the gravel banging beneath the car's frame on our way into Keady. After my mother rammed the car into PARK, she said into the backseat, "Help me carry out the things."

Again the hair on my neck jumped to attention. We heard the tinkle of the bell above our heads as we walked through the front door and felt the creak of the wooden floor boards beneath our feet. Television cartoons could be heard coming from the open door in the back of the store where the Wilsons lived.

My mother found her things and gathered them in her arms, my brother and I at her side the whole time. Behind us, we could hear Mrs. Wilson's heavy footfalls on the wooden floor as she made her way to the cash register. After my mother picked up a can of peas, she said, "Okay, that's it."

I took a deep breath, turned and walked to the counter.

Mrs. Wilson never looked at us as she rang in the food. Then, as she placed the last item into a bag, she looked directly at me and... smiled.

It was a smile that said she wasn't going to tell my mother what I

Continued on page 14...

Those words we speak

... continued from page 13
had said. It was the sweetest smile I'd ever seen in my life.

Whatever happened between my saying a Wilson couldn't be trusted and Mrs. Wilson's smile is beyond me. Did the Wilson kids tell her off for embarrassing them? Did Mr. Wilson tell her she better not make a fool of herself again? Or did she lose her nerve, suddenly vulnerable to a bunch of foul-mouthed farm-boys, the parents of whom she depended on for business to put food on the table for her own boys? I'll never know.

That smile haunts me

But that smile haunts me today. It was a smile that said, "Please forgive me for over-reacting and causing you pain."

I had said, "Everybody knows you can't trust a Wilson." Everybody — implying that common consensus in the community is that you folks are losers. You can't trust a Wilson — not ever, as in, every Wilson is not to be trusted for the simple reason of being a Wilson. Where had I learned this discrimination? Oh, Mrs. Wilson, if only I could take back those words!

The American poet Carl Sandburg had something to say about the words that get away from us in his poem "Primer Lesson": Look out how you use proud words.

When you let words go, it is not easy to call them back.

*They wear long boots, hard boots;
they walk off proud;
they can't hear you calling—
Look out how you use proud
words.*

Tongues can cause fires

James, in the New Testament pontificated on the use of our tongues: "Although [ships] are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark" (James 3:3-5).

Tongues can be sparks causing fires; tongues can be rudders, leading ships to storms or calm waters.

I think of all the words printed every day in the hundreds of newspapers in North America. Words, millions of them are produced every day on the Internet and espoused on television talk shows, TV dramas, news. Words of hatred bandied back and forth by presidents and terrorist leaders.

The writer of Proverbs says, "He who guards his mouth and his tongue, keeps himself from calamity" (Pr. 21:23). I didn't get into trouble that day for my words. But they've stuck in my memory, typed on the computer screen of my mind forever. Wherever they are, I just hope the Wilsons have deleted them from their memory.

When you let words go, it is not easy to call them back.

Association dedicated to theological renewal in mainline churches

(Tyndale College & Seminary News Release)

TORONTO — Victor Shepherd, Professor of Historical Theology and Bastian Chair of Wesley Studies at Tyndale Seminary, has been appointed to the Confessing Theologians Commission of the Association for Church Renewal (ACR). The ACR is an organization of the leaders from more than 20 renewing and confessing movements within mainline Protestant churches in North America. The Confessing Theologians Commission is appointed to advise the ACR, its planning group, and its member organizations on ongoing theological questions and concerns.

According to Thomas C. Oden, the convenor of the Commission, "The ACR seeks theologians to serve who are already well in-

formed on church renewal issues, and who have shown the courage to speak out even when there are countervailing pressures to keep quiet. Our efforts are specifically directed toward the renewal of theological integrity within the mainline churches. We have been asked by the ACR to draw together in an ongoing conversation the most astute theologians of mainline traditions who have been conscientiously identified with major objectives of the renewing and confessing movements."

The Commission consists of 17 theologians representing renewing and confessing movements in eight mainline traditions: United Church of Canada, Episcopalian, Lutheran, Presbyterian, United Methodist, American Baptist, United Church of Christ, and Disciples of Christ.

Moving Mother

"But can she bring her cat?" I ask the woman as we finish the tour of the senior citizen's apartment building. When she answers that pets are allowed, I know we have a chance of at least getting my mother to consider this place. I tell my brother we need to bring Ma over to see it for herself. We both know how she feels about moving out of her house.

"They'll have to carry me out." That's what she always tells us. To be honest, that's precisely what I worry about.

The September sun is warm and bright as we climb the front steps to my mother's house. She looks a little puzzled to see us arriving together. Surprise gives way to determination as we explain that we want her to come and see this great retirement residence.

"I'm not going to a nursing home," she insists through tightened lips.

"It's not a nursing home, Ma," I soothe. "It's a senior citizen's apartment complex. And we just want you to have a look."

No intention of leaving her house

When we get to Cedarwood, my brother is at least 20 feet ahead of us, holding the door open. My mother reluctantly shuffles along beside me. I try not to tug at her, especially since she suddenly seems even slower and wobblier than usual. She is telling me again that she has no intention whatsoever of leaving her house. As we enter the building she looks over the spacious atrium, and just for a minute stops talking.

"Isn't it beautiful?" I ask.

Sunlight streams in through the glass roof onto the park benches, trees and Victorian lampposts. Elderly people wander about at a leisurely pace, some stopping to chat, others sitting on benches here and there. Thirty-nine apartments on three floors surround the atrium on three sides. There are no closed-in hallways. Each floor overlooks this garden-like area.

"Can't afford it," says Ma. "And I can't move at my age. It's too much work. And what about my cat? You think I'm gonna have her put down so I can move in here? No way!"

I'm ready for her. "Your pensions will cover all of your living expenses and you'll still have money to spare. Jim and I will do the work of moving. Your cat is welcome to live with you here."

A grey-haired lady saunters by with her walker and greets us. I can tell my mother is thinking about an identical walker she has at home. Out back. Covered in plastic. (Walkers are for old people.)

We wander about the facility. I show her the hair salon, the backyard and the activity schedule.

Intangible Things

Heidi VanDerSlikke

She tells me she can't afford it. Moving is too much work and what about her cat?

We keep strolling. Several elderly ladies are seated at a large table in the dining area, enjoying coffee and laughing together. I tell her the coffee is free and they serve it every day at 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. She tells me it oughta be free considering what they charge for rent. Then she asks me again how much this place costs.

At last we sit down for a few minutes and the lady from the office comes out to see us. My mother tells the woman her life story, starting at World War II and ending with the fact that she couldn't possibly leave her house. The lady listens patiently and tells my mother there's a waiting list. It usually takes four to six months for a person to get in. While my mother explains once more that she's absolutely not moving, I tell my brother to put her name on the waiting list.

I figure she can always turn it down if something does come available.

We drop my brother off at his house and I spend the evening with Ma. Over supper she asks me again about the waiting list and the services available at Cedarwood. Later she hands me her bankbook and asks me to tally her monthly income and compare it to the cost of renting an apartment. We go through the details several times over.

Now I'm paying attention

Frankly, I'm not really listening when all of a sudden she says, "Well, maybe you could tell Jim to put my name on the waiting list." Now I'm paying attention. I double check to be sure I heard correctly. Then I call my brother.

"Our mother wants you to put her name on the waiting list," I tell him. I think I hear his jaw hitting the floor.

As I hang up the phone I think of all the people praying for my mother on this day. My husband, my kids, my mother-in-law and my closest friend are all asking God for his help in this. As she tucks away her bankbook, she asks, "Are you sure they'll let me keep my cat?"

To be continued next month.

Heidi VanDerSlikke lives in Harriston, Ont.



Largest single-day Bible distribution ever

(Religion Today) — Some 370,000 of the World Bible Translation Center's "Easy-to-Read English Bibles" were distributed Nov. 11, 2001, at a conference for church leaders in Ibadan, Nigeria, making it the largest single-day Bible distribution in history. The event, put on by Christ for all Nations (CfAN) ministry, a European crusade organization led by German evangelist Reinhard Bonnke,

drew crowds of over 1.3 million.

More than 70,000 Nigerian church leaders crowded into Ibadan's Liberty Stadium for a church leaders' conference organized in conjunction with Bonnke's five-day preaching campaign in Ibadan. On the last day of the conference, each attendee able to get a seat found a bag of five Bibles underneath it.

"This was the best-kept secret

of the whole campaign," commented Rob Birkbeck, International Projects and Publications Director for CfAN. "If the word got out that Bibles were being given away, we'd never be able to control the crowds. People would get killed." Crowds of conference hopefuls pressed into the stadium, already dangerously overcrowded, as word began to circulate about the Bibles.

JANUARY 14, 2002

Justice

Author provides theological rationale for restorative justice

The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Punishment

by T. Richard Snyder,
Eerdman Publishing, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2001, 159 pages
Reviewed by Rev. John de Vries, Jr.

The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Punishment is a 'must-read' book for all Christians who subscribe to the Reformation principle of *semper reformata* — reformed and always reforming. Like most of us, T. Richard Snyder, was raised to think that evil must be punished. But reading Scripture and life experiences have forced him to move beyond his Sunday school teachings.

Exposing negative influences

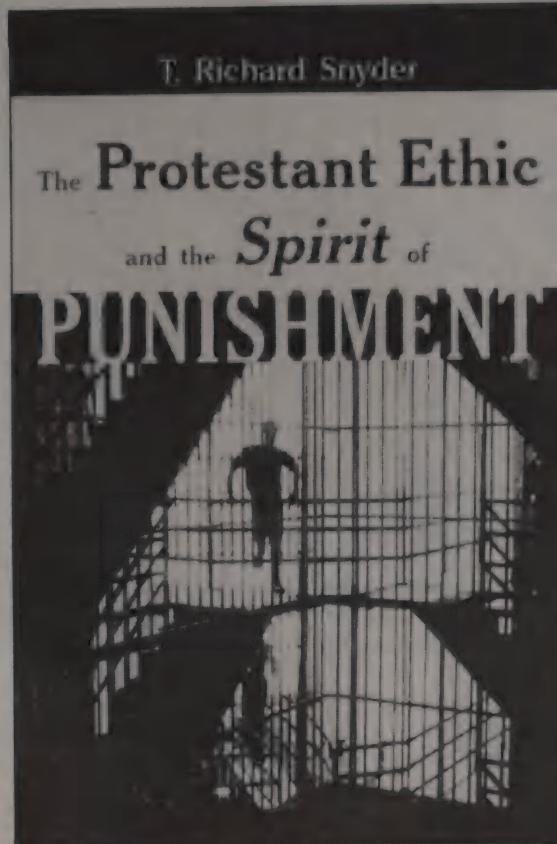
The author, professor of theology and ethics, and academic dean of New York Theological Seminary who is also involved in the school's master's program offered at Sing Sing prison "exposes the negative ways Protestant theology and ethics have distorted society's treatment of offenders." Snyder provides a theological rationale and practical directions to current *restorative justice* alternatives that are rooted in the heart of the gospel and the church's

evangelistic mission.

The Criminal Justice System, fueled by a spirit of punishment, he argues, threatens to destroy us (U.S.A.) — 47 crimes punishable by death, 3,000 on death row, the doubling of warehoused inmates since 1990. Because it lacks a creation grace theology and is strongly individualistic, Protestantism prepared the soil that nurtured the "spirit of punishment" that is in the "air that we breathe".

Flight into individualism

In contrast to Calvin, Luther and Barth limited grace to personal sin and painted a picture darker than the Old Testament. How does God's grace in redemption leave out any relationship to systems and social structures? The individualism of Protestant redemptive grace wherein Jesus "saved a wretch like me" leads to "crass headhunting." Without creation grace, marginal people become objectified as nonpersons



— as criminals, slaves, Indians, Blacks, women. However, Jesus defined people by their humanity rather than their condition. Calvin's teachings and Matthew 25 prohibit the "flight into individual-

individual often ignores many societal causes and the realities of the culture of criminality.

The contrast between a *retributive justice* that focuses on power and punishment and *restorative justice* that highlights relationships, reconciliation and the larger picture is illustrated with examples from South Africa, Sweden, New Zealand, Oregon, Minnesota and Native American practices. The results of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission have been dramatic when perpetrators and victims forgave and embraced. The political power has moved from the white to the people of color. But since the economic power is still with the whites, murder and car-jackings continue to be an everyday occurrence. The response to crime will be complete only when economic justice is realized and other systemic discrepancies are addressed.

Criminals cut and burned

Comparing the criminal justice system to the medical system is instructive: unwanted body growths are 'cut and burned.' When marginal/criminal people are 'cut and burned', we do not address the real problem. Only when people return to their traditional practices, says Snyder, do they nurture healing and restoration. The foundations for social policy and restorative justice are the God-given sacredness of persons, their interconnectedness and their interdependence. In contrast to western post-enlightenment and dichotomous thinking,

the traditional understanding of life is that of life as a circle. When one is harmed or imprisoned, all are harmed or imprisoned. Versions of these traditional restorative justice practices may be: *ubuntu* — my life and future is bound up with yours (South Africa); *gachacha* — full discussion (Rwanda); or *law* — to live together nicely (Native).

Respecting 'the other'

In the Judeo-Christian tradition, explains Snyder, restorative justice emanates from the Christian understanding of the covenant, the incarnation and the trinity. The covenant makes us mutually accountable. The incarnation calls us to respect 'the other'. The trinitarian understanding of God invites us to intimate relationships with each other as though we are one. This all removes the gap between *us* and *them*. The offender is one of *us* and not one of *them*. The author's abolition of the reductionism of current individualistic evangelism is firmly rooted in his understanding of the nature of creation grace and redemptive grace. The "circle of redemption" leads to a broader understanding of evangelism and the good news of Jesus Christ.

The evidence supports the author's claim that, except for Mennonite and Quaker initiatives, the church "has abrogated its responsibility for dealing with criminal justice." The author's claims are supported by his understanding of Jeremiah and Isaiah's views of *righteousness*, which is better translated as *justice*. This has direct implications, suggests Snyder, for the care of the victim, for hospitality for the perpetrator and the released, and for the outreach to prisoners with a "cup of water". Prisons are not run by bad people. Prisons are the warp and woof of the larger society. It is not up to *them* but all of *us*.

Getting tougher on crime has not helped society get well or safe. When the church as the watchtower sees what is coming, it is called to proclaim the truth so all can see that God is longing to breathe a new spirit within us as a church and as a nation. Snyder's book is an excellent analysis of the *spirit of punishment* that we have grown up with and perhaps contributed to. His theological astuteness, prison experience and his prophetic and reformation 'flight-correction' make this a book for everyone who knows that something has gone wrong with the present system of incarceration, retribution and execution.

Basic principles of restorative justice drafted at Ottawa congress

CC Staff

OTTAWA — Criminal justice experts met in Ottawa during November 2001 to discuss the use of restorative justice, mediation and informal or traditional methods of dealing with certain kinds of crimes.

These were a major topic of discussion at the Tenth U.N. Congress on Crime Prevention and Treatment of Offenders held in Vienna in early 2000. Out of that congress came a draft of basic principles which were circulated to 37 countries. Many non-governmental agencies are involved in the process as well as criminal justice officials from the countries participating.

The U.N. sponsored the congress not to impose rules on member countries but in order to define the basic principles of restorative justice for those countries seeking other options to current methods of dealing with crime. The paper that came out of the congress does not seek to define restorative justice or the philosophy behind it but just to outline its methods.

Restorative justice involves various forms of victim-offender mediation, conferencing and circles. These attempt to arrange for different ways for the offender to make restitution and to atone for his offense through community service rather than locking him up for several months or years.

Other justice options

Such programs are not designed to displace existing ways of dealing with crime but merely to provide other options. They have proven particularly promising in dealing with juvenile offenders.

Usually a third party is brought in who is impartial and who can bring together the one who committed the crime and those impacted by it in order to bring home to the offender the effect his actions have had on other people.

It is important that participation in restorative justice programs be voluntary, say the experts. Those too traumatized by the crime to face the offender would otherwise be victimized once again. For such a program to work, there also

needs to be some agreement between the offender and the victim about the facts of the case; it is essential that the offender acknowledge responsibility for what he has done.

For such procedures to work, they need to be carefully integrated into existing programs. For example, if an admission of guilt in a conference between victim and offender is admissible in regular court, few offenders would wish to participate and the program would be unworkable. For in the event that the two parties could not come to an agreement, the case would have to be returned to the regular courts.

The program would also need people who are well trained as "facilitators" who can act as mediators. This means that a restorative justice program cannot be put in place overnight.

The definitions and recommendations that issued from the Ottawa congress will be the main agenda at the eleventh session of the U.N. commission, to be held early this year.

News

Christians face persecution in India, Indonesia, Muslim world

... continued from page 2
but continually peddled by extremists.

India's Christians do not always further their cause, however. A November 4 anti-caste rally planned by Dalits was nearly jeopardized by outlandish claims made by a few Christian agencies claiming that "300 million Dalits are on the verge of conversion to Christianity."

Hindu extremist groups became alarmed and planned to disrupt the rally. But the organizer forced the offending Christian groups to stay away, and between 50,000 and 100,000 Dalits gathered in New Delhi to convert en masse to Buddhism and repudiate the Hindu caste system.

Christian leaders stood in solidarity with the Dalits, but Dr. John Dayal warned, "The rally has made us see that we will have to build our own links to the Dalit community, and that will take years."

Indonesia— Ambon violence spreads to Sulawesi

This was the year the Jakarta government's careful containment policy of limiting the dreadful two-year civil strife between Muslims and Christians in Maluku came unstuck.

The end of the year saw at least 30,000 Christians in the Poso region of central Sulawesi island under fierce attack from the same Muslim extremist force — Laskar Jihad — that has wreaked such havoc in Maluku. Many suspect they are trying to neutralize the Christians in central Sulawesi in order to prevent them coming to the aid of the Christian refugees from Maluku in the north, who are thought to be the extremists' eventual target.

All year, church leaders in Maluku appealed for international intervention, but this was never likely, given Jakarta's attitude: "Keep out and let us handle things."

Jakarta's policy was just as bad — limit the violence to the eastern archipelago of islands that make up Maluku. The war had caused around 9,000 deaths in an area of two million people, so in political terms, there are larger conflicts. Even the constant stream of forced conversion stories did not give Western governments pause to protest.

Jakarta was also distracted with the ouster of President Wahid in June. Megawati replaced him, but her policies are no more enlightened, and some feel that she will have less influence on Muslim extremists than her predecessor.



Two African Christians paused near a group of Muslim women to pray for their continent last Aug. 3, when believers worldwide joined in prayer for God's blessings on Africa.

Still, in spite of the depressing outlook, there are signs that exhaustion on Ambon is starting to bring the two sides together. Also, the September 11 attacks and the subsequent war on terrorism might well bring pressure on Jakarta to stop Saudi Arabian money from flowing to extremist groups.

Laskar Jihad is among the beneficiaries of Osama bin Laden's funds and training networks. Said a pastor in Ambon, "They exert an influence out of all proportion to their numbers because they are so well armed."

As usual, however, the greatest hope of Indonesia's 20-million-plus Christians lies in the country's 180 million Muslim population continuing to prefer moderation to extremism and democracy to an Islamic state.

Muslim world — Christians flee persecution

In the face of relentless threats, deprivation and even physical torture, a growing number of Christians under severe persecution in Muslim countries chose this past year to flee abroad and apply for asylum in the "Christian" West.

As might be expected, they came from countries high on the list for religious intolerance — Sudan, Turkmenistan, Iran, Egypt, Pakistan and Iraq. Some were young singles, others complete families who managed to slip across their national borders to freedom. All had been subjected to one form or another of cruel pressure, from beatings and confiscation of their property to dire threats against their spouses, parents or children.

For most, the persecution came from government authorities, although some were betrayed by

their own family members.

"It's a very personal decision that no one can make for somebody else," admitted a Christian who spent several years in prison for his faith. Although he helped expedite a complicated escape plan this year for several Muslim converts, he said he was disappointed every time persecuted Christians decided to "give up" and leave their homelands. Only God knows how it discourages the fledgling church left behind, he said, and it often takes years for the believer who has escaped to adjust to a new culture, language and way of life.

Initially, most of the asylum seekers remained anonymous for their own safety, particularly those labeled as apostates for leaving Islam to become Christians. Some still face the dreary delays of life as a refugee, caught for months in a holding pattern before meeting legal requirements to immigrate. And despite all they have gone through, they remain incurably homesick for their own land and people.

Nigeria — implosion over Islamic law

Since 1999, thirteen states in northern Nigeria have adopted "sharia," or Islamic law, as their legal code, despite the country's constitution declaring a secular system of government. The result has been growing resentment among Christians throughout the country, and violent clashes between Muslims and Christians threaten to destabilize Africa's most populous country.

Perhaps the most telling event of 2001 was 11 days of rioting that took place in Jos, in central Nigeria, from September 7 to 17. What started as a brief attack on a

Christian woman who crossed into a Muslim area escalated into street clashes between Muslims and Christians fighting with crude weapons. By the time military authorities restored order, an estimated 2,000 people had died, many more were injured and thousands were forced to flee their homes.

A Jos Christian resident told of how at one point during the riots it took him two days to travel two kilometers from his home to his office, and he had to step over dead bodies most of the way. He lost his home to arson and fled with his family outside the city.

Jos, which is predominately Christian, is not the first city that has suffered the consequences of Muslim-Christian hostility since the debate over sharia began. However, Jos had long been known as a beautiful, peaceful area. A number of Christian organizations have headquarters in Jos, and relations between adherents of the two major religions had generally been friendly.

So the riots came as a shock to many and a sign of difficult times ahead for this West African country of more than 110 million, a population that is almost evenly divided between Christians and Muslims.

Pakistan — 'black' laws victimize Christians

The cruel misuse of Pakistan's vaguely defined blasphemy laws continued to dangle fearful headlines before the country's Christian community during the past year. Along with other non-Muslim minorities, Christians were arrested and jailed on spurious charges of insulting Islam, the Quran or the Muslim prophet Mohammed. If convicted on the latter charge, the death penalty is mandatory.

School principal Pervaiz Masih, 33, has been victimized since April in such a case, concocted by a Muslim trying to found a rival private school in a village near Sialkot. Arrested, beaten and jailed without bail ever since, the Christian teacher was accused by a second-hand source of having slandered the prophet Mohammed to several teenage students some two months earlier. Like more than 50 other Pakistani Christians tried for blasphemy over the past 15 years, he faces months if not years more in prison before the courts will rule on his case.

Families of Christians being tried for blasphemy were subjected to violent threats, sometimes forcing them to flee their homes and communities. In June, the elder

brother of two Christian men jailed two years earlier on blasphemy allegations was robbed and his wife raped. When local police proved reluctant to pursue the unknown assailants, the brother was forced to find a safer location for his own family, as well as the wives and eight children of his jailed brothers.

Ayub Masih, after five years Pakistan's longest-jailed Christian on blasphemy charges, has been on death row since April of 1998, when he was convicted by a lower court solely on the verbal accusations of his Muslim neighbor. After interminable delays, the Multan High Court rejected his appeal this past July, throwing such a case for the first time up to the Supreme Court level. According to an article in Lahore's liberal *The Friday Times*, Masih is "without hope, and forgotten by his country's justice system."

Vietnam — tribal Christians face onslaught

In 2001, Vietnam experienced a superficial liberalization of religious policy that masked a marked increase in repression.

The show of liberalization was the granting in April of legal recognition after 25 years to the southern Evangelical Church of Vietnam (ECVN) — the main Protestant body in the country. The church still awaits any movement from the government on allowing it to open a theological training school or to print Christian literature. So this new status has only served to highlight blatant government interference and increased pressure on the house churches to join the newly-legalized body.

For the 500,000 tribal Protestant Christians in the Central Highlands, repression has increased. In particular, Christians among the Hmong minority have been hammered. A list smuggled out of the country revealed no less than 32 Hmong church leaders in prison, 21 of them imprisoned last year alone. And there are many more from other tribes, too.

When minority tribes marched in their thousands on the city of Pleiku on February 1, many Christian leaders were held responsible for instigating the protests. Twenty leaders from the Ede minority were rounded up, and for months afterwards police thugs have traveled the region, beating Christians, abducting leaders, and forbidding anyone to hold services.

Tribal Christians in Vietnam experienced one of the worst crackdowns on religious expression since the communist takeover of the south in 1975.

JANUARY 14, 2002

Cross Border Broodings/Analysis

Islam and the terrorists

By Hofman

The dust has finally settled in New York and the fires will likely be out by the time you read this. U.S. and British war planes have pounded the Taliban governmental structure and the armed force of the Afghans with relentless destruction. We are all hoping it will soon end with the capture of the leading terrorist, bin Laden.

In the meantime the Bush-Blair partnership is working hard to bring some depth to the anti-terrorist alliance which consists of most of the nations of the world. Some of those nations are very reluctant participants, and many of their citizens are openly hostile to the American determination to bring bin Laden to justice. It is quite obvious that ours is a very insecure position in a dangerous world. The threat of further terror has materialized in the rash of anthrax-bearing mail sent into the heart of the nation, causing several deaths and bringing a plague of fear into the daily life of thousands.

As quiet as clams

In this context the U.S. and Britain are doing all they can to impress the world that the enemy is not the Arab world, nor the Muslim faith or people. Those speaking for the administration never miss an opportunity to praise the Islamic faith and Muslim people and to declare that the Quran calls for peace and love. This is a direct effort to discredit the crowds who cry out "Death to the Americans." But strangely, the leaders of the Islamic nations in the alliance are as quiet as clams, hoping that the storm will pass and that the war on terrorism will succeed without any



CC FILES

"I suspect that U.S. leadership knows very well that Islam has two faces and the really bad one is gaining ground by leaps and bounds."

effort on their part.

This leads us quite naturally to wonder just where the Islamic world really stands in this frightening struggle. How broad and how deep is the support for the Islamic terrorists? We hardly dare to think the worst in this frightening situation, which is that all of Islam is really for bin Laden. The leaders of many Muslim nations oppose him because if he succeeds they also could be deposed and replaced by radical extremists loyal to bin

Laden, like the Taliban. But that says nothing as yet about the general population or the Mullahs who speak for Islam.

Which leads us to ask about where the Quran and Islam really stand in this struggle. A recent full-page advertisement in the *Grand Rapids Press* paid for by the Islamic Center & Mosque of Grand Rapids declared that "Islam denounces any and all forms of terrorism.... Terrorism cannot be a means for any Islamic goal, and a

terrorist cannot be a Muslim, nor can a true Muslim be a terrorist. Islam orders peace and a true Muslim can only be a symbol of peace and maintenance of basic human rights."

Causing corruption in the earth

To support this, it quotes the Quran. "Whoever kills a human being other than for punishment of murder or causing corruption in the earth, it shall be as if he had killed all humanity...." That sounds very laudable and for many Muslims this can be taken at face value. But please note the exceptive clause: "... other than for ... causing corruption in the earth." That is exactly where bin Laden gets his justification and motivation.

The U.S. is the great Satan that has filled the earth with its corrupting culture and therefore must be completely banished from the Islamic world. It must get its troops out of Saudi Arabia and any other Muslim nation. Muslim land is holy and may not be defiled by the infidels. The world must also surrender any soil which has ever been occupied by Islam. That means the nation of Israel must also be destroyed. This is the agenda of radical Islam. That means that the peace plan between Israel and the Palestinians must be subverted. It cannot be allowed to succeed. The radicals of Hamas and Hezbollah see the issue with that kind of logic.

Islam has two faces

Now, it may be well to ask just where President Bush and his leadership stand in this whole matter. They undoubtedly are sincere in declaring that the U.S. is not fighting Islam or the Arab world or the Muslim people. They are undoubtedly also praying fervently that the Muslim world will believe what they say and will reciprocate with support against the terrorists. And they will continue to praise the Islamic faith as one totally against terrorism, but I suspect that U.S. leadership knows very well that Is-

bad one is gaining ground by leaps and bounds.

I will believe otherwise when the Mullahs of Saudi Arabia stand up and denounce bin Laden and terror. I hope that the President's people like Colin Powell will be quietly addressing these Mullahs to come forth with a word for life and against the death and misery created by the terrorists. I'm not holding my breath for it.

Picture of beauty and light

Last week a Christian professor wrote a piece in the *Grand Rapids Press* in which he painted a picture of Islam of beauty and light which the G.R. Mosque could have written. But an Egyptian Christian convert from Islam teaching at Calvin College had a much different story. He clearly set forth the two faces.

This is an extremely serious matter, not only for the world struggle, but for life in the U.S. as well. Georgie Ann Geyer, a columnist writing in the *Chicago Tribune*, recently saw the scenario as being one in which this nation, with about eight million Muslims of mixed citizenship, could have a potentially dangerous "fifth column."

Islam is a false religion, which judgment is easy enough to make, even for those who are not theologically inclined. What religion could hold out a promise of heaven with 44 virgins for any and all who self-destruct in that religion's cause and still be judged to be true?



Ty Hofman is a Yankee-Canuck living in Grand Rapids, Mich.

* "Fifth column" was a Second World War phenomenon in which nations aligned against the Nazis saw the rise of clandestine Nazi supporters who worked for Germany to win the war!

Rewriting the history of the Crusades

Harry der Nederlanden

In a column written for Assist News Service, Rev. Austin Miles, a chaplain and historian, refutes popular accounts of the Crusades that appear in the press to explain (and excuse) Muslim hostility toward Christendom. He quotes one such account:

"On or about 1095, Pope Urban II organized a holy war against Islam. Driven by the goal of uniting the European Empire under one identity, one religion, one pope, Christian soldiers promptly spent the next 196 years butchering Muslims in distant lands."

Horrible attacks on Christians

He points out that "the Christian Crusades began only after

over 458 years of horrific attacks on Christians, their monasteries and the Vatican itself by invading Muslims."

He reminds us that a few years after Mohammed had his visions and organized Islam, it began spreading itself by means of the sword. Islamic armies began by conquering Persia, and 25 years after the Quran was dictated, Gaza, Jerusalem, Armenia, Tripoli and Cyprus had been conquered as well.

"Muslims, on a rampage, invaded and conquered city after city, threatening civilization itself, creating a living nightmare for their victims," Austin tells us.

They attacked and destroyed numerous monasteries, and in 846 attacked and damaged the Vatican,

the centre of Christendom itself. In 1009 the forces of Islam sacked the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. Yet, it wasn't until 1096 that Pope Urban II organized the Crusades, whose primary purpose was to recover the so-called holy sites.

This account also differs markedly from a recent PBS special on the history of Islam, which represented the spread of Islam as the unification of formerly warring factions, divided by religious differences. Its expansion into the West was represented as the spread of a superior culture.

More and more, popular history is used to level the differences among religions and to depict Christianity as every bit as intolerant and aggressive as Islam. History tells a quite different story.

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News Comment

Nose for News



Bert Hielema

ONCE UPON A TIME... Wrong start. This is no fairytale. About five years ago, when my wife and I spent a lot of time in the South, a month in the spring and another in the fall, I developed severe headaches while running my regular 8-km hilly course around a picturesque lake. Foolishly — my male vanity, naturally — I kept on going, maybe because a good looking young woman was just ahead of me, and I wanted to get a better look at her. However, I couldn't catch up because my throbbing brain slowed me down too much.

Back in our apartment in Raleigh N.C., I phoned a specialist and had an appointment that same afternoon. The Harvard trained neurologist took all sorts of reflex tests and couldn't find anything. He recommended a catscan, at a cost of \$1,400 (U.S. of course) or more than \$2,000 (Cdn.). No surprise: he owned the clinic and the machine, and suggested that it would take at least six months before I would get one in Canada

and here I could have it right away — upon pre-payment of a fee. I said, "forget it, my travel insurance company might object." He charged me \$250 (U.S.) for a less than 30 minute examination. It took me six months to recover this from my insurance, which paid me the full amount less what OHIP reimbursed me for an equivalent Ontario-based examination: a mere \$49.50 (Can). No wonder, the U.S. spends 14 per cent of its Gross Domestic Product on health costs, the highest in the world, with dubious results, even though 30 million Americans have no medical coverage at all.

Well, the American doctor was wrong. No, I didn't get a catscan of my neck and head: the headaches never came back, but I did get one recently, on a two-week notice, one of my pelvis and abdomen, to locate some kidney problems I had developed. This catscan came after an ultrasound, x-rays and a cystoscopy into my kidneys, all in quick succession, proved inconclusive. Curiously, a younger brother, also a runner, developed kidney stones, too — my ailment — while two other brothers, non-runners, have had prostate problems. Well, I'll take kidney stones anytime, especially, since the recent ones are lodged in a place where they cause little or no discomfort — so far. I did have one painful experience some 35 years ago when a sudden, unannounced attack, early in the morning, while on a business trip, made me vomit with pain. I was fortunate then to pass them. Not this time apparently. Now I drink a lot of water and cranberry juice. So whenever you are in the greater Belleville

area and see a worried old man clutching a bottle with a suspiciously red content, it's not a wino, it's me, desperately looking for a washroom.

SINCE MY LAST KIDNEY ailment, medical procedures have greatly advanced. The surgery (almost butchery) has been replaced with non-intrusive laser cutting, minimizing body damage and maximizing recovery. So, hail to the Quinte area medical system and the urologists there: the healing arts function well and efficiently. In my own Tweed, too, we are exceptionally blessed with a new clinic, three capable doctors and a very competent staff.

Will this level of efficiency be maintained in the future? Harris keeps on screaming for money. And true, there is never enough. In the past three decades the cost of medical care has mushroomed, thanks, in part, to better — but ever more expensive — detection tools.

ALL THIS WILL BE IN vain, however, if we keep on treating our bodies as garbage dumps. In the U.S., and to a lesser degree here, 60 per cent of adults are overweight or obese. Some 300,000 Americans a year die from illnesses caused or worsened by obesity. Losing even 10 pounds can reduce the risk of diabetes or heart disease, and the cure is as simple as a 30 minute daily walk. Already two million Canadians suffer from diabetes, (which could increase) to three million before 2010. Worldwide, with more and more people adopting the wasteful Western life style — soft drinks, little exercise, refined products, fast and fatty foods — the World Health Organization estimated that diabetes will increase from 140 million now to 300 million in 25 years. Add an aging population, global warming, which means more respiratory diseases, more harmful bacteria and insects bearing contamination, and we have a prescription for disaster.

If we want to keep health care affordable and its quality acceptable, all of us have to work at it. We have to stop the trend toward becoming "A Fast Food Nation," and start to recognize again that good health begins at home and involves body, soul and spirit. The crucial question is: "Can we turn back the clock?"

WELL, FOR A MOMENT I will turn back the clock and have a quick glance at what I wrote last year and also look ahead to 2002.

In my first Nose issue of the

New Millennium (which really started January 1, 2001) I wrote that the economic forecast for the new year was not encouraging. Without sounding too cocky, my starting shot turned out to be right on: the world economy is in poor shape, and we with it.

I also wrote about the weather and made a hot forecast. Sure enough, this too came to pass: 2001 was the second warmest on record, with our fall months the warmest ever recorded.

I also mentioned California's power problems and predicted that when Ontario privatizes — now we know: in May 2002 — expect rates to jump. Just a few weeks ago, Premier Harris confirmed this. In that same column I alluded to ENRON, a company that greatly exploited the situation on the warm west coast, and after making millions in excess profits, still managed to go broke in record time and in mega-measure, exposing the lax accounting procedures large companies exploit to beef up their balance sheets. Expect next year GAAP — Generally Acceptable Accounting Procedures — to be really tightened, so that when large firms present a financial report, it reflects the true situation. I also mentioned deflation, not expecting that November came close, with a mere 0.7 per cent inflation rate.

Then there was the "Sharon or Shalom" piece, in which I looked at the past of this man of war and surmised that he would create great turmoil in the Middle East. Well, he did. Today we have an uneasy calm after the most deadly duel between the Israeli Army and Palestinian Youth.

In March — six months before it became official — I signaled the onset of a prolonged recession. I still stick with that. I was wrong in writing that the collapse of the American dollar was imminent. So far our looney has been weak, while the Yankee buck has gained. Also in March I gave 10 pointers to Roy Romanow who will present his vision on Health Care in Canada this year. Whenever this report is tabled, we will compare notes.

THE ENVIRONMENT WAS a frequent topic. Toward the end of the year, 100 Nobel Prize winners sent out an alarming message that the rich (we) must share with the poor — 80 per cent of the world's people, who will also suffer most from global warming we are causing. If not, more terror is in store. In late August, I wrote: "Who can point to a society so isolated, so homogeneous, so rich, and so wallowing in its contentment, as to be

in principle immune?" Unintentionally prophetic! September 11 has changed us — at least for a while. I devoted a few columns to the American reaction and was wrong about the impossibility of the campaign. The Taliban were rooted out much quicker than I and most others thought possible.

So, I have been right and wrong, which is par for the course, I presume.

SO, WHAT HAS 2002 IN store for us? Or, better, what is my educated guess?

In Canada: to me it looks that Ernie Eves will be the next premier in Ontario and call an election within a year before the economy gets so bad that people will clamor for change. Romanow in his Health report will recommend a fee for medical services geared to income. Chretien may well be replaced by Paul Martin.

The economy will decline further, and Afghanistan could revert back to anarchy, and if the American economy declines further, we could see great civic unrest there, as well. Gun sales have boomed, and with a massive arsenal available, violence may explode. If there are more terror attacks in the U.S.A., people will retreat more and more to rural areas and small cities, benefitting also Canada, its small towns and mid-size cities.

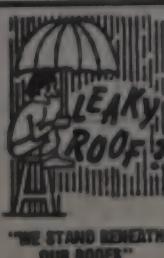
We then may see a reverse brain-drain. We may even see Americans buy here. We have fewer guns, much less violence and better health care and quality of life. Will the Canadian dollar go up in value? I believe so, as foreigners, seeing the fragile foundation of the U.S., will sell dollars.

Also, the introduction of the Euro may soften the American currency. Much black money in Europe has been temporarily converted to greenbacks, which now can safely be repatriated to Germany and France and other continental countries.

Well, there you have it. Some bold predictions. Let's hope that I am wrong on the more ominous projections. Nevertheless, in year 2 of Millennium Three, I wish all of you richer relationships, deeper insight and greater contentment.

My kidney stone operation is scheduled for mid-January. It's an out-patient affair. Being in good health otherwise, I hope to recover soon.

Bert Hielema lives in Tweed, Ont.



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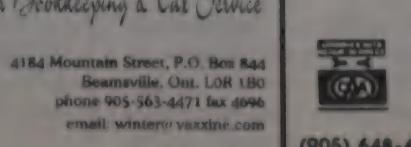
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News

Christianity almost defeated in Britain, Cardinal says

LEEDS, England (Zenit.org) — Christianity is almost beaten in Britain, Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor told a gathering of priests, according to *The Times of London*.

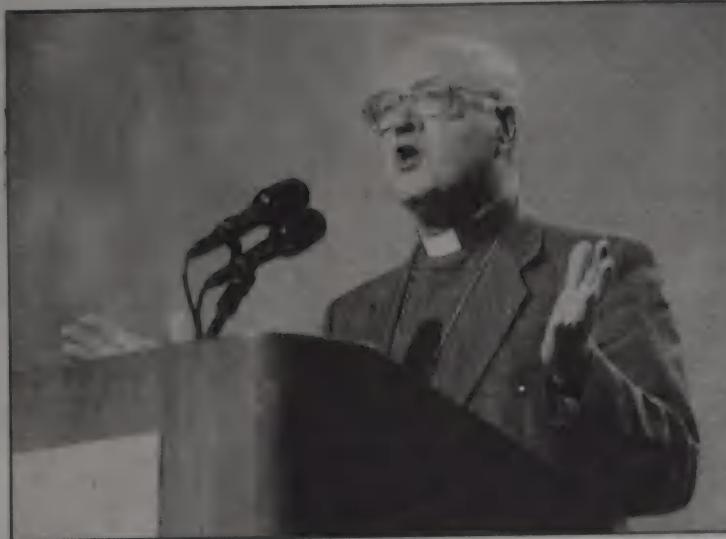
Instead of turning to Christ, people are turning to music, New Age, the environmental movement, the occult and consumerism, the archbishop of Westminster said in candid remarks to the National Conference of Priests.

He also spoke of the damage and shame brought to the Catholic Church by the scandal of pedophile priests.

Tacit atheism

His analysis of Britain's spiritual decay echoed the Anglican archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, who last year said: "A tacit atheism prevails. Death is assumed to be the end of life. Our concentration on the here-and-now renders a thought of eternity irrelevant."

Last November a survey by the National Center for Social Research showed that 44 per cent of all adults in the United Kingdom



Anglican archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey,

say they have no religious affiliation. That figure rose to two-thirds among 18- to 24-year-olds.

Earlier in 2000, Peter Brierley, the leading expert on church attendance in Britain, suggested that Christian life will be all but dead in 40 years with less than 0.5 per cent of the population attending a church service. Some observers

speculate that practicing Muslims now outnumber practicing Anglicans in Britain.

Cardinal Murphy-O'Connor, the primate of England and Wales, went further than Carey's assessment. The extent to which Christianity informed modern culture and intellectual life in Britain today had been hugely diminished,

the cardinal said.

"It does seem in our countries in Britain today, especially in England and Wales, that Christianity, as a sort of backdrop to people's lives and moral decisions—and to the government, the social life of the country—has now almost been vanquished," he said.

Increasing numbers of people now gained their "glimpses of the transcendent" from involvement in music, New Age movements and green issues, he added. People are seeking transient happiness in alcohol, drugs, pornography and recreational sex, the cardinal said.

Indifference to Christian values

"There is indifference to Christian values and to the Church among many young people and, indeed, not only the young," he said. "You see quite a demoralized society, one where the only good is what I want, the only rights are my own, and the only life with any meaning or value is the life I want for myself."

The cardinal also warned of the excesses of the free-market economy and consumerism.

"When we live in a culture which says, 'What I have got is what I am,' we are in big trouble," he noted. "While I understand that—to some degree—we are all consumers, this is something we all enjoy a bit, it's quite clear that a sole reliance on the market place does in the end actually prevent people from taking their destiny into their own hands."

"There are many today who think that to believe in God is to limit one's freedom," the cardinal added.

Confronting the problem of priests who have sex with children, the cardinal warned the Church against "apathy" and "negligence."

"I do not try to make excuses for the past," he said. "Yes, we must recognize the depth and the extent of the damage done to the Church and its mission in these cases."

He said priests, and especially bishops, had not been sufficiently aware of the "insidious" and "pathological" nature of child abuse and had not treated all allegations with the seriousness they merited.

More funerals than weddings in the church, survey finds

Cedric Pulford

LONDON (ENI)—A snapshot of British religious beliefs has found that people attach more importance to having a church funeral than to being married by the church or having their children baptized.

Three-quarters of those who died in 2000 had a Christian funeral ceremony, while the proportion of first marriages taking place in church was 54 per cent and only around one-third of children were baptized in their first year.

The findings are reported in the 2002/03 edition of *Religious Trends*, published by Christian Research, the UK's leading compiler of church statistics.

Two-thirds (67 per cent) of the population believed in God in the 1990s, but only 49 per cent believed that Jesus was the Son of God.

Church attendance in Britain continued to decline during the decade to just under eight per cent of the population. However, many individual congregations in England—at least one in five—bucked the trend, in many cases through offering a popular Christian education program known as the Alpha course.

Members of ethnic minorities

often led the way in church attendance, with 28 per cent in Inner London going to services.

Religious Trends records the increase in the proportion of women ministers in the UK, including, in 2000, 56 per cent in the Salvation Army, 22 per cent in the United Reformed Church, 15 per cent in the Church of Scotland and 12 per cent in Anglican churches.

Easier to find help for body than soul

It was easier to find help for the body than for the soul, with 115,000 doctors and 34,000 ministers of religion.

Bishops have emerged as a particularly net-savvy group: almost half (48 per cent) were found to use the Internet every day.

Commenting on the findings, Heather Wright, editor of the UK *Christian Handbook*, also published in a new (2002-03) edition by Christian Research, told ENI: "There is a growing interest in spiritual issues, more than [was the case] ten to fifteen years ago. It's part of the post-modern thing. But people pick and mix—some even believe in heaven and not in God!"

She said the fact that many believers did not accept Jesus as the son of God could be "argued both

ways". Many people were not specific in their beliefs, but with believers making up two-thirds of the population there was "a residual faith to build on".

A re-analysis of church attendance data had produced a "less dismal" picture, with flourishing churches offsetting the overall declining trend, Wright added.

Meanwhile, a survey of British social attitudes has shown that churches face an uphill task in persuading people that sex belongs only within marriage. Only just over half (54 per cent) of the adults surveyed believed it was wrong to have children outside marriage. The 1989 figure was 70 per cent.

The country has become more accepting of premarital sex, although most respondents still think cheating in marriage is wrong.

Christian minister Ian Gregory, from Newcastle-under-Lyme, central England, responded to the findings by describing as unhelpful the idea that unmarried couples were "living in sin".

He wrote in the *Daily Telegraph*: "I am delighted when couples want to make public affirmation of their marriage in a church ceremony, but it is by no means mandatory that they should do so to avoid the wrath of God."

Four churches bombed in Indonesia

JAKARTA, Indonesia (Zenit.org) — Explosions rocked four churches in the volatile central Sulawesi province of Indonesia recently, while a separate blast hit Jakarta, killing one person, shattering what had been relative calm during recent religious festivals, Reuters reported.

Deputy national police spokesman Edward Aritonang told Reuters a grenade was either thrown at or exploded in the hands of a man standing outside a restaurant in Jakarta a couple of hours before dawn, killing him.

Police in the central Sulawesi capital of Palu in eastern Indonesia said four blasts outside churches in the city—three hit simultaneously as the New Year began—wounded at least one policeman. The province has seen savage clashes between Muslims and Christians in the past three years.

Aritonang said he did not believe the explosions in Sulawesi and the national capital, Jakarta, were related. They occurred despite the presence of tens of thousands of police and soldiers on patrol to keep New Year's Eve celebrations in check.

The Palu blasts were caused by unidentified devices. Some 200 people were in one of the churches when the midnight blasts occurred, a local priest said. No worshippers were hurt. It wasn't reported whether all the churches were Catholic facilities.

Much of the religious and communal violence occurring in the world's most populous Muslim nation stems from political and economic grievances that were forcibly suppressed during the three-decade iron rule of President Suharto.

Those grievances burst open when Suharto fell from power in 1998, especially in outlying eastern regions where Muslims and Christians are roughly equally represented. Overall, Muslims make up 85-90 per cent of the country's 210 million people.

The Palu incidents occurred less than two weeks after a peace deal was struck by Christians and Muslims in an area around Poso, a town 60 miles from Palu. More than 1,000 people have been killed in three years of clashes around Poso.

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And editing style. b) Please provide us with clear copy. <i>Christian Courier</i> is not responsible for any errors due to hand written or phoned-in advertisements.</p> | <p>MARINUS STUIVENBERG a resident of Chatham and formerly of Harwich Township died on December 5, 2001, at the age of 79. Born in Scherpenzeel, the Netherlands, son of the late Aart & Maria (Mark) Stuivenberg. Beloved husband of Dorothy (Dykstra) Stuivenberg. Dear father and grandfather of: Tina & Ralph Vyn — Belmont, Ont. Christine, Scott, Brian, Tia Arthur & Dorothy Stuivenberg — Calgary, Alta. Anya, Marcus Maria Greta & Russell Reid — Wawa, Ont. Matthew, Marcus Henrietta Stuivenberg — Calgary, Alta. Survived by one brother and three sisters and predeceased by four brothers and one sister. Marinus served in the Dutch Army from 1945 - 1948 in Indonesia and was a member of the Dutch Canadian Legion. He came to Canada in 1953 and worked at Libby's for 29 years, retiring in 1985. He was a member of the First Christian Reformed Church of Chatham, where the Funeral Service was held on December 8, 2001, with Rev. Paul Stadt officiating. Correspondence address: Catherine VanderPloeg, 242 Gilmore Ave., Winnipeg MB R2G 0Z2</p> <p>"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help." (Psalm 121:1)</p> <p>On December 13, 2001, the Lord in His mercy took to Himself our beloved husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather</p> <p>HENDRIK RANTER in his 80th year, at his residence. Lovingly remembered by his wife Gerritina (Dina) Ranter (nee Wesselink). Dear father of Annie & Jake Kikkert — Wingham Ena & Rick Ficht — Woodstock Alice & Ernie Fast — B.C. Fred & Laurie Ranter — Curries Freda Ranter — Woodstock Loved grandfather of Raymond & Nanda Kikkert, Kevin & Darlene DeJong, Stan & Jane Kikkert, Paul Kikkert, Jason & Julie Dicker, Denise Kikkert, Michelle & Chris Taylor, Sarah & Jeff, Richard & Sherry Craig & Jennifer, Nicole & Ryan. Loved great-grandfather of Emma, Haley, Caleb and Mia, Mackayla, Hudson and Ashlyn, Kelsey, Trey and Emily. Dear brother of Geertruida VanderVelde and Janna Van Voorst, both of the Netherlands. The Funeral Service was held at the Maranatha Christian Reformed Church, Woodstock, Ont. on December 17, 2001, with Rev. John Zantingh officiating. Interment at Hillview Cemetery. Contributions to the Canadian Cancer Society or Back to God Hour would be appreciated. Correspondence address: 256 Victoria St. N, Woodstock, ON N4S 6W3</p> <p>Wanted</p> <p>Looking for single person or couple, non-smokers, to house sit for part of January, all of February and March, just north of Dundas. Must love big dogs. Phone 905-628-5624 or 1-800-598-1006.</p> <p>PICTURE THIS! You can advertise in <i>Christian Courier's</i> Business and Service Directory once a month for only: \$25.00 + GST</p> <p>Promote your business to thousands of readers.</p> | <p>CHATHAM, ONT.: <i>Chatham Christian High School</i> invites teachers, who demonstrate a passionate love for God and young people, to join our team. We are a growing school in a brand new facility, supported by a strong Christian community. We seek applications for Vice-Principal as well as teachers with strengths in the following areas: Physical Education, Math, Science, Business, and Special Education. Please address your letter of application and resume to:</p> <p>John Van Pelt, 475 Keil Dr. S, Chatham, ON N7M 6L8 Phone 519-352-4980, fax 519-352-4041; e-mail: johnvanpelt@chathamchristian.ca</p> <p>TORONTO, ONT.: <i>Toronto District Christian High School</i> invites applications from qualified Christian teachers for the following five full-time positions beginning August 1, 2002: Computer Science, Mathematics, Industrial Arts, Biology, and Science. For more information check our website: tdchristian.on.ca Send resumes to: siebenga@tdchristian.on.ca or Ren Siebenga, <i>Toronto District Christian High School</i>, 377 Woodbridge Ave., Woodbridge, ON L4L 2V7</p> <p>PRINCIPAL Christian elementary school in Lindsay, Ontario, is inviting applications for a possible teaching principal opening commencing August 1, 2002. School of 131 students and 7 teachers requires a cheerleader with clear statement of faith, teaching certification, some administrative training and experience. School participates in Christian Schools International health and pension benefits program. Stable staff, supportive parents, eager students in the heart of cottage country! Please direct questions and applications to Hank Ufkes, Board Chair, <i>Heritage Christian School</i>, 159 Colborne St. W., Lindsay, ON K9V 5Z8, e-mail: heritage.lindsay@sympatico.ca</p> <p>Job Opportunity</p> <p>Granum CRC is seeking a PASTOR for our congregation in sunny southern Alberta. We have majestic mountains 45 minutes to the west and a city of 70,000 located 40 minutes to the east. Having been here for over 95 years, we have deep roots and a proud heritage. Qualifications would include strong and clear preaching and teaching, as well as pastoral care for all age groups in our congregation. An appreciation for nature and the rural lifestyle would be an asset. For more information contact our search committee in confidence at:</p> <p>TJ Detmers, Box 94 Granum, AB T0L 1A0 Canada E-mail: tjdetmers@hotmail.com Phone & Fax: 403-687-3939</p> <p>For Rent</p> <p>Furnished apartment rooms. Very close to private colleges and Fanshawe College. Please call: 519-451-6787</p> |

Classifieds

Job Opportunities

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Deadline: Screening of applicants will begin by February 15, 2002 and continue until the position is filled. Inquiries regarding the position may be directed to Dr. Hoeksema at 616-957-6212 or hoet@calvin.edu.

Calvin College is a Christian college within the Reformed tradition of Christianity. The college encourages persons with disabilities, women and minority candidates to apply.

RRSPs: Your insurance for a comfortable retirement

(NC)—Financial experts agree that, to retire comfortably, Canadian investors should begin saving as early as possible. Making monthly contributions to a Registered Retirement Savings Plan (RRSP) can make saving easier, and can provide investors with security to assist in building a more comfortable retirement.

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- News Canada

Bullying affects more than just victims

(NC)—Addressing early signs of antisocial behaviour among young people is a proven way to prevent youth violence and reduce crime rates. Bullying is a prime example of such behaviour.

The impact of bullying is felt, not only by the bully's victim, but also by his or her peer group, school, and community. Repeated bullying can cause great psychological distress for victims. For bullies, aggressive behaviour, if left unchecked, can continue into adulthood and lead to a life of crime. In the broader context, bullying creates a climate of fear in which children constrain their activities to avoid becoming victims.

Although bullying is a widespread problem, many teachers have been frustrated by the lack of programs and resources to deal with the issue. With assistance from the National Crime Prevention Centre, Centre Option-Prévention T.V.D.S. (a non-profit community group in Montreal), is doing something about this. It has developed the prototype for a board game called Bullies: Who dares to speak out? (*Guets-Apens: Qui osera parler?*) that teaches children about bullying and how to deal with intimidation. The game is designed for ten- to twelve-year-olds — one age range in which children are particularly likely to engage in bullying.

According to Centre coordinator Manon Lacroix, the board game is an innovative and effective way to reach young people, and helps them better absorb and remember the information. "Teachers say that bullying is an issue rarely raised by students," says Lacroix. "Testing the game offered a great opportunity to discuss the issue and have kids voice their fears."

For more information on the Bullies game prototype and how early childhood intervention is helping to reduce crime and its associated costs in communities across Canada, visit the National Crime Prevention Centre Web site at www.crime-prevention.org or call toll-free 1-877-302-NCPC.

- News Canada

PROGRAM DIRECTOR for Latin America**Christian Reformed World Missions**

The Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) has an opening for a full time **Program Director** for Latin America for Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM). Under the supervision of the executive director, the qualified individual will lead and implement the work of CRWM in Latin America and encourage development of staff and partners to maximize the overall ministry. Other responsibilities include implementation of CRWM plans, policies and procedures, supervising and evaluating personnel and programs, investigating new mission opportunities, and reporting valid and necessary information to CRWM and the CRCNA.

Bachelor's degree in missiology, theology or organizational management along with advanced knowledge of at least one other culture and language (preferably Spanish) is required. Readiness to travel frequently and/or for extended periods necessary. Excellent interpersonal, written, and oral communication skills are essential. Membership in the Christian Reformed Church or willingness to become a member of the Christian Reformed Church is essential.

A detailed job description is available upon request. For consideration, submit your resume and a letter of interest by **January 25, 2002** to:

Director of Personnel
Christian Reformed Church in North America
2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE
Grand Rapids MI 49560-0500
616-224-5881/ Fax: 616-224-5896
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Miscellaneous

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JANUARY 14, 2002

Events/Advertising**Calendar of Events**

Items appearing in this column are run free of charge if they advertise an admission-free event, if they accompany an ad for the same event, or at the discretion of CC. In case of free listing, space limitations apply. The charge otherwise is \$7.50 per line, or \$1.50 per 1/3 line, per insertion.

- Jan. 13 Dutch Service Ancaster CRC, 3 p.m. 70 Garner Rd. E, (Hwy 53), Rev. Harry A. Vander Windt preaching.
 Jan. 19 Concert St. Thomas "Crescendo" Male Choir, Covenant CRC St. Catharines, 7:30 p.m. Freewill offering.
 For info. call 519-637-4357
- Feb. 8-10 Ottewell CRC, Edmonton, Alta. 40th anniversary. Please call 780-461-4586.
 Feb. 15 Chr. Credit Union, Edmonton, Alta. 50th Anniversary, Francis Winspear Centre, 780-426-7165 See ad.
 Feb. 22-24 50th Anniversary Inglewood CRC, Edmonton, Alta. Friday Family Night, Saturday evening Banquet, Sunday 10 a.m. Celebration Worship Service, 4 p.m. Organ concert/Hymn Sing. See ad in this issue.
 April 21 Calgary 1st CRC 50th Anniv. Former members welcome. For info. 403-243-2244 celebr8fifty@aol.com

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**Miscellaneous**

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Christian agencies defend printer from claims of discrimination

Alan Doerksen

MARKHAM, Ont. — A coalition of three Christian agencies has just gone to court to support the cause of Scott Brockie, a Toronto-based printer who was fined \$5,000 for refusing to print a job for a homosexual group. The case addresses the larger issue of how much freedom Christians have to express their beliefs in public life in Canada.

Offensive to his religious beliefs

Brockie owns a printing company called Imaging Excellence. About two years ago, Brockie refused to print material for the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives (CLGA) on the basis that homosexuality was offensive to his religious beliefs. CLGA is a public advocacy group designed to preserve information about, promote and celebrate gay and lesbian lives. Ray Brillinger, of CLGA, filed a human rights complaint under the Ontario Human Rights Code alleging that Brockie discriminated against him on the basis of his sexual orientation. At that time, Brockie testified that he "endeavors to live his life according to biblical principles" and that "providing printing services to lesbian and gay organizations was in direct

opposition to his beliefs."

A Board of Inquiry appointed under the Ontario Human Rights Code found that Brockie did discriminate, and fined him \$5,000. The Board said, "It is reasonable to limit Brockie's freedom of religion in order to prevent the very real harm to members of the lesbian and gay community..." and that "Brockie remains free to hold his religious belief and practice them in his home and in his Christian community."

Infringing on his freedom of conscience

Brockie appealed to the Ontario Divisional Court on the basis that the decision infringes his freedom of religion and conscience. Last month, Dec. 5 to 7, that court heard the latest Brockie case. The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC), the Catholic Civil Rights League, and Christian Legal Fellowship (CLF) intervened in the case together under the name the Canadian Religious Freedom Alliance (CRFA). Represented by David Brown, the CRFA argued that "the freedom of conscience and religion guaranteed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms includes the freedom to refuse to provide services to a cause or activity to which an

individual objects on bona fide conscientious or religious grounds."

CRFA contended that the Board of Inquiry should have decided that Brockie was within his rights to refuse to do work for a cause that offended his religious beliefs. Brockie has previously done work for gay and lesbian clients. It was not that Mr. Brillinger was gay that was at issue but rather, the fact that the CLGA promotes the gay and lesbian cause, stated CRFA.

CRFA intervened in this case to assert the need for recognition of the right to freedom of religion and conscience in the Ontario Human Rights Code. There can and should be accommodation for conscientious or religious beliefs in human rights legislation, argued CRFA.

No hierarchy of rights

The coalition also contended that the recent Supreme Court of Canada case, British Columbia College of Teachers vs. Trinity Western University, establishes a new approach to situations where rights conflict. The Supreme Court of Canada held that there is no hierarchy of rights. When addressing a situation of competing rights, the Board of Inquiry should have spelt out the rights and resolved the

conflict if possible. Although the Ontario Human Rights Code protects individuals from discrimination on a number of grounds, including sexual orientation, it does not protect causes from such discrimination, argued CRFA.

CRFA submitted that the Board of Inquiry employed a narrow view of freedom of conscience and religion that is inconsistent with Canadian legal history.

CRFA also criticized last year's Board of Inquiry that, although it stated that it "did not doubt Brockie's sincerity," it then chose to rely on the testimony of Dr. McLeod, a United Church minister, which called into question the sincerity of Brockie's religious beliefs. Brockie is not a member of the United Church, yet the Board relied on the evidence of the practice of that denomination to impugn the sincerity of Brockie's religious beliefs by attributing a certain rigidity to them, claimed CRFA: "Brockie, the Board seems to be implying, is outside of the 'mainstream' of Christian views about homosexuality, which in turn undermines the credibility of his beliefs."

Check your beliefs at the door

CRFA closed its case by asserting that in last year's board of inquiry decision, "... freedom of conscience and religion [was] subordinated to equality rights based on sexual orientation. This approach effectively requires any person 'to check his conscientious or religious beliefs at the door' when he engages in any business activity with members of the public. It marks a 'zero tolerance' approach to the public exercise of conscientious or religious belief...."

Anticipating the objection that "you cannot separate a cause from the people involved, the CRFA argued that compelling Brockie to print material that conflicts with his beliefs is tantamount to compelling him to support that cause. It concluded: "So while in a certain sense one cannot separate a cause from the people who are involved in it, by the same token people involved in a cause cannot legitimately expect those who disagree with their cause to support it. That is the balance which a democracy strikes amongst contending causes and views."

To date, the Ontario Divisional Court has not yet released a verdict for this case.

News Digest

It's a jungle out there

ABBOTSFORD, B.C. — Tigers are alive, well, and living in Vancouver's suburbs. Recently, a TV news program broadcast shots of Kisa, a one-year-old Siberian tiger, cowering at a family home in Abbotsford, reports the *Globe and Mail*. While in the back yard, Kisa took a run at the TV reporter, stopped short only by a thick chain leash around its neck.

Abbotsford Mayor George Ferguson was not amused by the footage. "I never knew we had a tiger in town," he said. "Tigers are nice to look at in the jungle. They're beautiful animals. But I wouldn't want one next door to me." Abbotsford is now taking a hard look at passing an exotic pet law, he asserted.

Tigers are easy to buy, reports Julie Woodyer of Toronto-based animal rights group Zoocheck. "If you go on the Internet, you can get one within 24 hours for about \$150."

Dog receives hero's award

CALGARY — Last month, a dog became the first animal to receive the Calgary Humane Society's Caring for Critters award. Blaze, a German Shepherd-Labrador cross, saved the life of a kitten named Ember when he found her badly burned and half-starved on an abandoned property, while scouting controlled burn locations with his owner.

Rescues come naturally to Blaze, whose owners, Donna and Konrad Zacharias, are volunteer firefighters in Beiseker, 50 km northeast of Calgary. The couple will adopt the aptly-named Ember, after she gets treatment for her burned paws.

Ancient car going strong

KINGSBRIDGE, England (Ananova) — An 82-year-old woman is still driving her first car which she bought more than 60 years ago. Joan Galloway bought the 1938 Morris 8 second-hand in 1940 for £65 — and it's still going strong after more than 259,000 km.

Galloway, from Kingsbridge, named the two-seater James and said: "It is still a joy to drive, even after all these years."

In 1988 she and her late husband Malcolm drove the veteran vehicle round Britain — raising £3,000 for Guide Dogs for the Blind. Now Galloway is planning another marathon trip to mark her car's 65th birthday.

Bonnke draws huge crowds in Nigeria



PHOTO CREDIT

Scenes from German evangelist Reinhard Bonnke's recent crusades in Nigeria. Bonnke appears in two photos, lower right.

IBADAN, Nigeria (EP) — Almost four million people gathered in Ibadan, Nigeria to see and hear German evangelist Reinhard Bonnke at the Great Gospel Crusade Nov. 7-11, 2001. The meetings took place at an old airport. "We have seen the Spirit of God working wonders in our city, the capital of the Yoruba people," said the Rev. Dr. Moses Avansiola.

Gov. Lam Adesina, a Muslim, welcomed Bonnke to the city with an official gathering at his office. He asked the evangelist to pray for the peace and prosperity of Ibadan in

